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OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

AND A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS.

Originally published in Six Volumes, 8vo.

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.

LATE PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

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CHRISTIANITY CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM;

BEING

AN ANSWER

TO

A SERMON,

LATELY PUBLISHED, BY THE REV.——

1791.]

PREFACE.

It may be proper just to remark, that the animadversions I have made on Mr. ———'s Sermon did not arise from my conviction of there being any thing even of plausibility in his reasonings, but from an apprehension, that certain accidental and occasional prejudices might give some degree of weight to one of the weakest defences of a bad cause that was ever undertaken. I have taken up more time in showing that there is no *proper connexion* between the unitarian doctrine and the principles of liberty than the subject may seem to require; but this will not be thought superfluous by those who recollect that that idea seems to be the great hinge of Mr. ———'s discourse, and that it appears amongst the orthodox part of the dissenters to have been productive already of unhappy effects. I shall only add, that these remarks would have appeared much sooner but for severe indisposition, and that I was induced to write them chiefly from a persuasion that they might perhaps, in the present instance, have somewhat of additional weight as coming from one who is *not* an unitarian.

Cambridge,
Sept. 17, 1791.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

"CHRISTIANITY consistent with a Love of Freedom," was written when Mr. Hall was twenty-seven years of age: and he never would consent to its re-publication. He continued to think the main principles correct and important; but he regarded the tone of animadversion as severe, sarcastic, and unbecoming. Three or four editions have, however, been printed surreptitiously; and one of them, which now lies before me, is so complete an imitation of the original edition of 1791, as usually to escape detection. It is printed with an old-fashioned type, and on dingy coloured paper, to suit its assumed age. But on comparing it closely with the genuine edition, I find that three of the capital letters, on different pages, have too modern and broad a face; and, on holding up the paper on which it is printed to a strong light, I perceive a water-mark which gives the date 1818 to the *paper* of a pamphlet which purports to be *printed* in 1791! If any of even the lowest class of booksellers will have recourse to such contemptible forgeries as this, an author is evidently no longer master of his intellectual property, nor can he when he pleases withdraw it from the public eye.

This, though one of the earliest productions laid by Mr. Hall before the public, is, with the exception already adverted to, by no means calculated to deteriorate his reputation. It contains some powerful reasoning as well as some splendid passages, and the concluding four or five pages exhibit a fine specimen of that union of severe taste, and lofty genius, and noble sentiment, which is evinced, I think, more frequently in his compositions than in those of any other modern author.

I have no fear of incurring blame for having cancelled throughout the name of the individual against whom Mr. Hall's strictures were levelled. Venerable for his age, and esteemed for his piety, who would now voluntarily cause him, or those who love him, a pang?

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY,
June 1, 1831.

CHRISTIANITY

CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM, &c.

THIS is a period distinguished for extraordinary occurrences, whether we contemplate the world under its larger divisions, or in respect to those smaller communities and parties, into which it is broken and divided. We have lately witnessed, with astonishment and regret, the attempts of a celebrated orator to overthrow the principles of freedom, which he had rendered himself illustrious by defending; as well as to cover with reproach the characters of those by whom, in the earlier part of life, he was most caressed and distinguished. The success of these efforts is pretty generally known, and is such as it might have been expected would have been sufficient to deter from similar attempts. But we now behold a dissenting minister coming forth to the public under the character of a flatterer of power, and an *accuser of his brethren*. If the splendid eloquence that adorns every part of Mr. BURKE's celebrated book cannot shelter the author from confutation, and his system from contempt, Mr. ———, with talents far inferior, has but little to expect in the same cause. It is not easy to conceive the motives which could impel him to publish his sermon. From his own account it should seem he was anxious to disabuse the legislature, and to con-

vince them there are many amongst the dissenters who highly disapprove the sentiments and conduct of the more patriotic part of their brethren. How far he may be qualified from his talents or connexions, as a mouth, to declare the sentiments of any considerable portion of the dissenters, I shall not pretend to decide, but shall candidly confess, there are not wanting amongst us persons who are ready upon all occasions to oppose those principles on which the very existence of our dissent is founded. Every party will have its apostates of this kind; it is our consolation, however, that their numbers are comparatively small, that they are generally considered as our reproach, and that their conduct is in a great measure the effect of necessity, as they consist almost entirely of persons who can only make themselves heard by confusion and discord. If our author wishes to persuade the legislature the friends of arbitrary power are conspicuous for their number or their rank in the dissenting interest, he has most effectually defeated his own intentions, as scarce any thing could give them a meaner opinion of that party, in both these respects, than this publication of its champion. The sermon he has obtruded upon the public is filled with paradoxes of so singular a complexion, and so feebly supported, that I find it difficult to lay hold of any thing in the form of argument, with sufficient steadiness for the purpose of discussion.

I shall endeavour, however, with as much distinctness as I am able, to select the fundamental principles on which the discourse rests, and shall attempt, as I proceed, to demonstrate their falsehood and danger.

Our author's favourite maxim is the inconsistency of the christian profession with political science, and the certain injury its spirit and temper must sustain from every kind of interference with the affairs of government. Political subjects he considers as falling within the *peculiar* province of the irreligious; ministers, in particular, he maintains, should ever observe, amidst the concussions of party, an entire neutrality; or if at any time they depart from their natural line of conduct, it

should only be in defence of the measures of government, in allaying dissensions, and in convincing the people they are incompetent judges of their rights. These are the servile maxims that run through the whole of this extraordinary discourse; and, that I may give a kind of method to the following observations upon them, I shall show in the first place the relation christianity bears to civil government, and its consistency with political discussion, as conducted either by ordinary christians or ministers; in the next place, I shall examine some of the pretences on which the author founds his principles.

Section I.

On the Duty of common Christians in Relation to Civil Polity.

The momentous errors Mr. ——— has committed, appear to me to have arisen from an inattention to the proper design of christianity, and the place and station it was intended to occupy. On this subject I beg the reader's attention to the following remarks:—

1st. Christianity was subsequent to the existence and creation of man. It is an institution intended to improve and ennoble our nature, not by subverting its constitution, or its powers, but by giving us a more enlarged view of the designs of Providence, and opening a prospect into eternity. As the existence of man is not to be *dated* from the publication of christianity, so neither is that order of things that flows from his relation to the present world, altered or impaired by that divine system of religion. Man, under the christian dispensation, is not a new structure erected on the ruin of the former; he may rather be compared to an ancient fabric, restored, when it had fallen into decay, and beautified afresh by the hand of its original founder. Since christianity has made its appearance in the world, he has continued the

same kind of being he was before, fills the same scale in the order of existence, and is distinguished by the same propensities and powers.

In short, christianity is not a reorganization of the principles of man, but an institution for his improvement. Hence it follows, that whatever rights are founded on the constitution of human nature, cannot be diminished or impaired by the introduction of revealed religion, which occupies itself entirely on the interests of a future world, and takes no share in the concerns of the present in any other light than as it is a state of preparation and trial. Christianity is a discovery of a future life, and acquaints us with the means by which its happiness may be secured; civil government is altogether an affair of the present state, and is no more than a provision of human skill, designed to ensure freedom and tranquillity during our continuance on this temporary stage of existence. Between institutions so different in their nature and their object, it is plain no real opposition can subsist; and if ever they are represented in this light, or held inconsistent with each other, it must proceed from an ignorance of their respective genius and functions. Our relation to this world demands the existence of civil government; our relation to a future renders us dependent on the aid of the christian institution; so that in reality there is no kind of contrariety between them, but each may continue without interference in its full operation. Mr. ———, however, in support of his absurd and pernicious tenets, always takes care to place civil government and christianity in opposition, whilst he represents the former as carrying in it somewhat antichristian and profane. Thus he informs us, *that civil government is a stage, erected on which, man acts out his character, and shows great depravity of heart.* All interference in political parties, he styles *an alliance with the world, a neglecting to maintain our separation, and to stand upon our own hallowed ground. There is one way*, says he, by which he means to insinuate there is only one, *in which you may all interfere in the government of your country, and that is by prayer to God, by whom kings reign.* These

passages imply that the principles of civil polity and religion must be at perpetual variance, as without this supposition, unsupported as it is in fact, they can have no force or meaning.

2d. Mr.——— misleads his reader by not distinguishing the innocent entertainments or social duties of our nature from those acts of piety which fall within the *immediate province* of christianity.

The employments of our particular calling, the social ties and endearments of life, the improvement of the mind by liberal inquiry, and the cultivation of science and of art, form, it is true, no part of the christian system, for they flourished before it was known; but they are intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of the human race. A christian should act ever consistent with his profession, but he need not always be attending to the peculiar duties of it. The profession of religion does not oblige us to relinquish any undertaking on account of its being *worldly*, for we must then go out of the world; it is sufficient, that every thing in which we engage, is of such a nature, as will not violate the principles of virtue, or occupy so much of our time or attention, as may interfere with more sacred and important duties.

Mr. ——— observes, *Jesus Christ uniformly waved interesting himself in temporal affairs, especially in the concerns of the then existing government;* and hence he draws a precedent to regulate the conduct of his followers. That our Saviour did not intermeddle with the policy of nations, I am as willing as our author to admit; for the improvement of this, any more than any other science which might be extremely short and defective, formed no part of his mission, and was besides rendered quite unnecessary, by that energy of mind which, prompted by curiosity, by our passions and our wants, will ever be abundantly sufficient to perpetuate and refine every civil or human institution. He never intended that his followers, on becoming christians, should forget they were men, or consider themselves as idle or uninterested spectators on the great theatre of

life. The author's selection of proofs is almost always unhappy, but in no instance more than the present, when he attempts to establish his doctrine of the unlawfulness of a christian interfering in the administration of government on our Saviour's silence respecting it, a circumstance of itself sufficient to support a quite contrary conclusion; for if it had been his intention to discountenance the study of political subjects, he would have furnished us, without doubt, with some general regulations, some stated form of policy, which should for ever preclude the necessity of such discussion; or, if that were impracticable, have let us into the great secret of living without government; or, lastly, have supplied its place, by a theocracy similar to that of the Jews. Nothing of this has he accomplished, and we may therefore rest assured, the political affairs of nations are suffered to remain in their ancient channels, and to be conducted as occasions may arise, by christians or by others, without distinction.

3d. The principles of freedom ought, in a more peculiar manner, to be cherished by christians, because they alone can secure that liberty of conscience, and freedom of inquiry, which is essential to the proper discharge of the duties of their profession. A full toleration of religious opinions, and the protection of all parties in their respective modes of worship, are the natural operations of a free government; and every thing that tends to check or restrain them, materially affects the interests of religion. Aware of the force of religious belief over the mind of man, of the generous independence it inspires, and of the eagerness with which it is cherished and maintained, it is towards this quarter the arm of despotism first directs its attacks, while through every period, the imaginary right of ruling the conscience has been the earliest assumed, and the latest relinquished. Under this conviction, an enlightened christian, when he turns his attention to political occurrences, will rejoice in beholding every advance towards freedom in the government of nations, as it forms not only a barrier to the encroachments of tyranny, but a security to the diffusion and establishment of truth. A considerable portion of

personal freedom may be enjoyed, it is true, under a despotic government, or, in other words, a great part of human actions may be left uncontrolled; but with this an enlightened mind will never rest satisfied, because it is at best but an indulgence flowing from motives of policy, or the lenity of the prince, which may be at any time withdrawn by the hand that bestowed it. Upon the same principles, religious toleration may have an accidental and precarious existence, in states whose policy is the most arbitrary; but, in such a situation, it seldom lasts long, and can never rest upon a secure and permanent basis, disappearing for the most part along with those temporary views of interest or policy, on which it was founded. The history of every age will attest the truth of this observation.

Mr. ———, in order to prepare us to digest his principles, tells us in the first page of his discourse, *that the gospel dispensation is spiritual, the worship it enjoins simple and easy, and if liberty of conscience be granted, all its exterior order may be regarded under every kind of human government.* This is very true, but it is saying no more, than that the christian worship may be always carried on, if it is not interrupted; a point, I presume, no one will contend with him. The question is, can every form of government furnish a *security* for liberty of conscience; or, which is the same thing, can the rights of private judgment be safe under a government, whose professed principle is, that the subject has no *rights at all*, but is a vassal dependent on his superior lord. Nor is this a futile or chimerical question, it is founded upon fact. The state to which it alludes, is the condition at present of more than half the nations of Europe; and if there were no better patriots than this author, it would soon be the condition of them all. The blessings which we estimate highly, we are naturally eager to perpetuate, and whoever is acquainted with the value of religious freedom, will not be content to suspend it on the clemency of a prince, the indulgence of ministers, or the liberality of bishops, if ever such a thing existed; he will never think it secure, till it has a

constitutional basis; nor even then, till by the general spread of its principles, every individual becomes its guarantee, and every arm ready to be lifted up in its defence. Forms of policy may change, or they may survive the spirit that produced them; but when the seeds of knowledge have been once sown, and have taken root in the human mind, they will advance with a steady growth, and even flourish in those alarming scenes of anarchy and confusion, in which the settled order and regular machinery of government are wrecked and disappear.

Christianity, we see then, instead of weakening our attachment to the principles of freedom, or withdrawing them from our attention, renders them doubly dear to us, by giving us an interest in them, proportioned to the value of those religious privileges which they secure and protect.

Our author endeavours to cast reproach on the advocates for liberty, by attempting to discredit their piety, for which purpose he assures us, to be active in this cause is disreputable, and brings the reality of our religion into just suspicion. *Who are the persons*, he asks, *that embark? Are they the spiritual, humble, and useful teachers, who travail in birth, till Christ be formed in the hearts of their hearers? No. They are philosophical opposers of the grand peculiarities of christianity.* It is of little consequence of what descriptions of persons the friends of freedom consist, provided their principles are just, and their arguments well founded; but here, as in other places the author displays an utter ignorance of facts. Men who know no age but their own, must draw their precedents from it; or, if Mr. ——— had glanced only towards the history of England, he must have remembered, that in the reigns of Charles the First and Second, the chief friends of freedom were the puritans, of whom many were republicans, and the remainder zealously attached to a *limited* monarchy. It is to the distinguished exertions of this party, we are in a great measure indebted for the preservation of our free and happy constitution. In those distracted and turbulent

times which preceeded the restoration of Charles the Second, the puritans, who to a devotion the most fervent, united an eager attachment to the doctrines of grace, as they are commonly called, displayed on every occasion a love of freedom, pushed almost to excess; whilst the cavaliers, their opponents, who ridiculed all that was serious, and, if they had any religion at all, held sentiments directly repugnant to the tenets of Calvin, were the firm supporters of arbitrary power If the unitarians, then, are at present distinguished for their zeal in the cause of freedom, it cannot be imputed to any alliance between their religious and political opinions, but to the conduct natural to a minority, who, attempting bold innovations, and maintaining sentiments very different from those which are generally held, are sensible they can only shelter themselves from persecution and reproach, and gain an impartial hearing from the public, by throwing down the barriers of prejudice, and claiming an unlimited freedom of thought.

4th. Though christianity does not assume any immediate direction in the affairs of government, it inculcates those duties, and recommends that spirit, which will ever prompt us to cherish the principles of freedom. It teaches us to check every selfish passion, to consider ourselves as parts of a great community, and to abound in all the fruits of an active benevolence. The particular operation of this principle will be regulated by circumstances as they arise, but our obligation to cultivate it is clear and indubitable. As this author does not pretend that the nature of a government has no connexion with the felicity of those who are the subjects of it, he cannot without the utmost inconsistence deny, that to watch over the interests of our fellow-creatures in this respect, is a branch of the great duty of social benevolence. If we are bound to protect a neighbour, or even an enemy, from violence, to give him raiment when he is naked, or food when he is hungry, much more ought we to do our part, toward the preservation of a free government; the only basis on which the enjoyment of these blessings can securely rest. He who breaks the

fetters of slavery, and delivers a nation from thraldom, forms, in my opinion, the noblest comment on the great law of love, whilst he distributes the greatest blessing which man can receive from man; but next to that is the merit of him, who in times like the present, watches over the edifice of public liberty, repairs its foundations, and strengthens its cement, when he beholds it hastening to decay.

It is not in the power of every one, it is true, to benefit his age or country, in this distinguished manner, and accordingly it is no where expressly commanded; but where this ability exists, it is not diminished by our embracing christianity, which consecrates every talent to the public good. On whomsoever distinguished endowments are bestowed, as christians we ought to rejoice, when instead of being wasted in vain or frivolous pursuits, we behold them employed on objects of the greatest general concern; amongst which those principles of freedom will ever be reckoned, which determine the destiny of nations, and the collective felicity of the human race.

5th. Our author expresses an ardent desire for the approach of that period, when all men will be christians. I have no doubt that this event will take place, and rejoice in the prospect of it; but whenever it arrives, it will be fatal to Mr. ———'s favourite principles; for the professors of christianity must then become politicians, as the wicked, on whom he at present very politely devolves the business of government, will be no more: or, perhaps he indulges a hope, that even then, there will be a sufficient number of sinners left to conduct political affairs, especially as wars will then cease, and social life be less frequently disturbed by rapine and injustice. It will still, however, be a great hardship, that a handful of the wicked should rule innumerable multitudes of the just, and cannot fail, according to our present conceptions, to operate as a kind of check on piety and virtue. How Mr. ——— will settle this point I cannot pretend to say, except he imagines men will be able to subsist without any laws or civil regulations, or intends to revive

the long exploded tradition of Papias, respecting the personal reign.

Had christianity been intended only for the benefit of a few, or as the distinction of a small fraternity, there might have been some pretence for setting its profession in opposition to human policy, since it might then have been conducted without their interference; but a religion which is formed for the whole world, and will finally be embraced by all its inhabitants, can never be clogged with any such impediment as would render it repugnant to the social existence of mankind.

Section II.

On the Duty of Ministers in Respect to Civil Polity.

Mr. ——— is extremely severe upon those of his brethren, who, forsaking the quiet duties of their profession as he styles them, have dared to interfere in public affairs. This he considers a most flagrant offence, an alarming departure from their proper province; and in the fulness of his rage he heaps upon them every epithet which contempt or indignation can suggest; calls them meddling, convivial, political ministers, devoid of all seriousness and dignity. It is rather extraordinary, this severe correction should be administered by a man, who is, at that moment, guilty of the offence he is chastising; reproaches political preachers in a political sermon; ridicules theories of government, and at the same time advances one of his own, a most wretched one indeed, but delivered in a tone the most arrogant and decisive. It is not political discussion then, it seems, that has ruffled the gentle serenity of our author's temper; for he too, we see, can bend, when it pleases him, from his spiritual elevation, and let fall his oracular responses on the duty of subjects and of kings. But the persons on whom he denounces his anathemas have presumed to adopt a system of politics inconsistent with his own, and it is less his piety than his pride, that

is shocked and offended. Instead of submitting to be moulded by any adept in cringes, and posture-master of servility, they have dared to assume the bold and natural port of freemen.

It will be unnecessary to say much on the duty of ministers, in respect to political affairs, as many of the reflections which this subject would suggest, have been already advanced under a former head. A few considerations, however, present themselves here, to which I shall beg the reader's attention.

The duties of the ministerial character, it will on all hands be confessed, are of a nature the most sacred and important. To them should be directed the first and chief attention of every person who sustains it, and whatever is found to interfere with these momentous engagements, should be relinquished as criminal and improper. But there is no profession which occupies the mind so fully, as not to leave many intervals of leisure, in which objects that lie out of its immediate province, will have a share of our attention; and I see not, why these periods of recess may not be employed with as much dignity and advantage, in acquiring an acquaintance with the principles of government, as wasted in frivolous amusements, or an inactive indolence. Mr. ———, with his usual confidence, lays it down as a maxim, that the science of politics cannot be cultivated, without a neglect of ministerial duties; and one would almost be tempted to suppose he had published his sermon as a confirmation of this remark; for a more striking example of political ignorance in a teacher of religion, has scarcely ever been exhibited. As far, therefore, as the preacher himself is concerned, the observation will be admitted in its full force, but he has surely no right to make his own weakness the standard of another's strength.

Political science, as far as it falls under our present contemplation, may be considered in two points of view. It may either intend a discussion of the great objects for which governments are formed, or it may intend a consideration of the means which may be employed, and

the particular contrivances that may be fallen upon to accomplish those objects. For example, in vindicating the revolution of France, two distinct methods may be pursued with equal propriety and success. It may be defended upon its *principles* against the friends of arbitrary power, by displaying the value of freedom, the equal rights of mankind, the folly and injustice of those regal or aristocratic pretensions by which those rights were invaded; accordingly, in this light it has been justified with the utmost success. Or it may be defended upon its *expedients*, by exhibiting the elements of government which it has composed, the laws it has enacted, and the tendency of both to extend and perpetuate that liberty which is its ultimate object. But though each of these modes of discussion fall within the province of politics, it is obvious the degree of inquiry, of knowledge, and of labour they require, differs widely. The first is a path which has been often and successfully trod, turns upon principles which are common to all times and places, and which demand little else to enforce conviction, than calm and dispassionate attention. The latter method, involving a question of expediency, not of right, would lead into a vast field of detail, would require a thorough acquaintance with the situation of persons and of things, as well as long and intimate acquaintance with human affairs. There are but few ministers who have capacity or leisure to become great practical politicians. To explore the intricacies of commercial science, to penetrate the refinements of negociation, to determine with certainty and precision the balance of power, are undertakings, it will be confessed, which lie very remote from the ministerial department; but the *principles* of government, as it is a contrivance for securing the freedom and happiness of men, may be acquired with great ease.

These principles our ancestors understood well, and it would be no small shame if, in an age which boasts so much light and improvement as the present, they were less familiar to us. There is no class of men to whom this species of knowledge is so requisite, on several ac-

counts, as dissenting ministers. The jealous policy of the establishment forbids our youth admission into the celebrated seats of learning; our own seminaries, at least till lately, were almost entirely confined to candidates for the ministry; and as on both these accounts, amongst us, the intellectual improvement of our religious teachers rises superior to that of private christians, in a greater degree than in the national church, the influence of their opinions is wider in proportion. Disclaiming, as they do, all pretensions to dominion, their public character, their professional leisure, the habits of study and composition which they acquire, concur to point them out as the natural guardians, in some measure, of our liberties and rights. Besides, as they are appointed to teach the whole compass of social duty, the mutual obligations of rulers and subjects will of necessity fall under their notice; and they cannot explain or enforce the *reasons* of submission, without displaying the *proper end* of government, and the *expectations* we may naturally form from it; which, when accurately done, will lead into the very depths of political science.

There is another reason, however, distinct from any I have yet mentioned, flowing from the nature of an established religion, why dissenting ministers, above all men, should be well skilled in the principles of freedom. Wherever, as in England, religion is established by law with splendid emoluments and dignities annexed to its profession, the clergy, who are candidates for these distinctions, will ever be prone to exalt the prerogative, not only in order to strengthen the arm on which they lean, but that they may the more successfully ingratiate themselves in the favour of the prince, by flattering those ambitious views and passions which are too readily entertained by persons possessed of supreme power. The boasted alliance between church and state, on which so many encomiums have been lavished, seems to have been little more than a compact between the priest and the magistrate, to betray the liberties of mankind, both civil and religious. To this the clergy, on their part at least, have continued steady, shunning inquiry, fearful of

change, blind to the corruptions of government, skilful to *discern the signs of the times*, and eager to improve every opportunity, and to employ all their art and eloquence to extend the prerogative and smooth the approaches of arbitrary power. Individuals are illustrious exceptions to this censure; it however applies to the body, to none more than to those whose exalted rank and extensive influence determine its complexion and spirit. In this situation, the leaders of that church, in their fatal attempt to recommend and embellish a slavish system of principles, will, I trust, be ever carefully watched and opposed by those who hold a similar station amongst the dissenters; that, at all events, there may remain one asylum to which insulted freedom may retire unmolested. These considerations are sufficient to justify every dissenting minister in well-timed exertions for the public cause, and from them we may learn what opinion to entertain of Mr. ————'s weak and malignant invectives.

From the general strain of his discourse, it would be natural to conclude he was an enemy to every interference of ministers on political occasions; but this is not the case. *Ministers*, says he, *may interfere as peacemakers, and by proper methods should counteract the spirit of faction raised by persons who seem born to vex the state.* After having taught them to remain in a quiet neutrality, he invests them all at once with the high character of arbiters between the contending parties, without considering that an office of so much delicacy would demand a most intimate acquaintance with the pretensions of both. Ministers, it should seem, instead of declining political interference, are to become such adepts in the science of government, as to distinguish with precision the complaints of an oppressed party from the clamours of a faction, to hold the balance between the ruler and the subject with a steady hand, *and to point out, on every occasion, and counteract the persons who are born to vex the state.* If any should demand by what means they are to furnish themselves for such extraordinary undertakings, he will learn that it is not by political investiga-

tion or inquiry this profound skill is to be attained, but by a studied inattention and neglect; of which this author, it must be confessed, has given his disciples a most edifying example in his first essay. There is something miraculous in these endowments. This battle is not to the strong, nor these riches to men of understanding. Our author goes a step farther, for when he is in the humour for concessions no man can be more liberal. *So far as revolution*, says he, *are parts of God's plan of government, a christian is not to hinder such changes in states as promise an increase of happiness to mankind. But no where in the New Testament can a christian find countenance in becoming a forward active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* A christian is not to oppose revolutions, as far as they are parts of God's plan of government. The direction which oracles afford has ever been complained of for its obscurity; and this of Mr. ———, though no doubt it is fraught with the profoundest wisdom, would have been more useful, had it furnished some criterion to distinguish those transactions which *are* parts of God's plan of government. We have hitherto imagined the elements of nature, and the whole agency of man, are comprehended within the system of Divine Providence; but, as in this sense every thing becomes a part of the divine plan, it cannot be his meaning. Perhaps he means to confine the phrase *of God's plan of government* to that portion of human agency which is consistent with the divine will and promises, or, as he says, with an increase of happiness to mankind. If this should be his intention, the sentiment is just, but utterly subversive of the purpose for which it is introduced, as it concurs with the principle of all reformers in leaving us no other direction in these cases than reason and experience, determined in their exertions by a regard to the general happiness of mankind. On this basis the wildest projectors profess to erect their improvements. On this principle, too, do the dissenters proceed, when they call for a repeal of the test act, when they lament the unequal representation of parliament, when they wish to see

a period to ministerial corruption, and to the encroachments of an hierarchy equally servile and oppressive; and thus, by one unlucky concession, this author has admitted the ground-work of reform in its fullest extent, and has demolished the whole fabric he was so eager to rear. He must not be offended if principles thus corrupt, and thus feebly supported, should meet with the contempt they deserve, but must seek his consolation in his own adage, as the correction of folly is certainly *a part of God's plan of government.* The reader can be at no loss to determine whom the author intends by a *busy active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* The occasion of the sermon, and complexion of its sentiments, concur in directing us to Dr. Priestley, a person whom the author seems to regard with a more than *odium theologicum*, with a rancour exceeding the measure even of his profession. The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period, when the greater part of those who have favoured, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and with a softened effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide.*

* Whether or not the beautiful passage in the text was suggested by a floating vague recollection of the following lines of POPE, or were an avowed imitation of them cannot now be determined. But be this as it may, I think it will be readily admitted, that the rhythm and harmony of the passage in prose are decidedly superior to those in the lines of the poet·

"Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue,
But, like a shadow, prove the substance true.

It is a pity, however, our author in reproaching characters so illustrious, was not a little more attentive to facts; for unfortunately for him, Dr. Priestley has not in any instance displayed that disaffection to government with which he has been charged so wantonly. In his Lectures on History, and his Essay on Civil Government, which of all his publications fall most properly within the sphere of politics, he has delineated the British constitution with great accuracy, and has expressed his warm admiration of it as the best system of policy the sagacity of man has been able to contrive. In his Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, a much later work, where the seeds of that implacable dislike were scattered which produced the late riots, he has renewed that declaration, and has informed us, that he has been pleasantly ridiculed by his friends as being an unitarian in religion, and a trinitarian in politics. He has lamented, indeed, in common with every enlightened citizen, the existence of certain corruptions, which, being gradually introduced into the constitution, have greatly impaired its vigour; but in this he has had the honour of being followed by the prime minister himself, who began his career by proposing a reform in parliament, merely to court popularity it is true, at a time when it would not have been so safe for him to insult the friends of freedom after having betrayed their interest, as he has since found it.

Dr. Priestley has, moreover, defended with great ability and success the principles of our dissent, exposing, as the very nature of the undertaking demands, the folly and injustice of all clerical usurpations; and on this account, if on no other, he is entitled to the gratitude of his brethren. In addition to this catalogue of crimes, he has ventured to express his satisfaction on the liberation of France; an event which, promising a firmer establish-

For envied wit, like Sol eclips'd, makes known
Th' opposing body's grossness, not its own.
When first that sun too powerful beams displays,
It draws up vapours which obscure its rays:
But e'en those clouds at last adorn its way,
Reflect new glories and augment the day."—Ed.

ment to liberty than any recorded in the annals of the world, is contemplated by the friends of arbitrary power throughout every kingdom of Europe with the utmost concern. These are the demerits of Dr. Priestley, for which this political astrologist and sacred calculator of nativities, pronounces upon him that he is *born to vex the state.* The best apology candour can suggest, will be to hope Mr. ——— has never read Dr. Priestley's political works; a conjecture somewhat confirmed from his disclaiming all attention to political theories, and from the extreme ignorance he displays, through the whole of his discourse, on political topics. Still it is to be wished he would have condescended to understand what he means to confute, if it had been only to save himself the trouble and disgrace of this publication.

The manner in which he speaks of the Birmingham riots, and the cause to which he traces them, are too remarkable to pass unnoticed.

When led, says he, speaking of the sufferers, *by officious zeal, from the quiet duties of their profession into the Senator's province: unhallowed boisterous passions in others; like their own, God may permit to chastise them.* For my own part I was some time before I could develope this extraordinary passage; but I now find the darkness in which it is veiled is no more than that mystic sublimity which has always tinctured the language of those who are appointed to interpret the counsels of heaven.

I would not have Mr. ——— deal too freely in these visions, lest the fire and illumination of the prophet should put out the reason of the man, a caution the more necessary in the present instance, as it glimmers so feebly already in several parts of his discourse, that its extinction would not be at all extraordinary. We are, no doubt, much obliged to him for letting us into a secret we could never have learnt any other way. We thank him heartily for informing us that the Birmingham riots were a judgement, and, as we would wish to be grateful for such an important communication, we would whisper in his ear in return, that he should be particularly careful not to suffer this itch of prophesying to

grow upon him, men being extremely apt, in this degenerate age, to mistake a prophet for a madman, and to lodge them in the same place of confinement. The best use he could make of his mantle would be to bequeath it to the use of posterity, as for the want of it I am afraid they will be in danger of falling into some very unhappy mistakes. To their unenlightened eyes it will appear a reproach, that in the eighteenth century, an age that boasts its science and improvement, the first philosopher in Europe, of a character unblemished, and of manners the most mild and gentle, should be torn from his family, and obliged to flee an outcast and a fugitive from the murderous hands of a frantic rabble; but when they learn that there were not wanting teachers of religion, who secretly triumphed in these barbarities, they will pause for a moment, and imagine they are reading the history of Goths or of Vandals. Erroneous as such a judgement must appear in the eyes of Mr. ———, nothing but a ray of his supernatural light could enable us to form a juster decision. Dr. Priestley and his friends are not the first that have suffered in a public cause; and when we recollect, that those who have sustained similar disasters have been generally conspicuous for a superior sanctity of character, what but an acquaintance with the counsels of heaven can enable us to distinguish between these two classes of sufferers, and, whilst one are the favourites of God, to discern in the other the objects of his vengeance. When we contemplate this extraordinary endowment, we are no longer surprised at the superiority he assumes through the whole of his discourse, nor at that air of confusion and disorder which appears in it; both of which we impute to his dwelling so much in the insufferable light, and amidst the coruscations and flashes of the divine glory; a sublime but perilous situation, described with great force and beauty by Mr. Gray:

> "He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
> The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
> Where angels tremble while they gaze,
> He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
> Closed his eyes in endless night."

Section III.

On the Pretences Mr. ——— advances in favour of his Principles.

Having endeavoured to justify the well-timed exertions of christians and of ministers, in the cause of freedom, it may not be improper to examine a little more particularly under what pretences Mr. ——— presumes to condemn this conduct.

1st. The first that naturally presents itself, is drawn from those passages of scripture, in which the design of civil government is explained, and the duty of submission to civil authority is enforced. That on which the greatest stress is laid, is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers which be, are ordained of God. Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive unto themselves damnation. The Ruler is the Minister of God to thee for good. But if thou doest that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain. Wherefore ye must be subject, not only for wrath, but conscience sake." This passage, which, from the time of Sir Robert Filmer to the present day, has been the strong hold of the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, will admit of an easy solution, by attending to the nature of christianity, and the circumstances of its professors, during the period in which it was written. The extraordinary privileges and dignity conferred by the gospel on believers, must have affected the minds of the first christians, just emerging from the shades of ignorance, and awakened to new hopes, with singular force. Feeling an elevation to which they were strangers before, and looking down upon the world around them as the vassals of sin and Satan, they might be easily tempted to imagine the restraint of laws could not extend to persons so highly privileged, and

that it was ignominious in the free men of Jesus Christ to submit to the yoke of idolatrous rulers. Natural to their situation as these sentiments might be, none could be conceived more detrimental to the credit and propagation of a rising religion, or more likely to draw down upon its professors the whole weight of the Roman empire, with which they were in no condition to contend. In this situation, it was proper for the apostle to remind christians, their religion did not interfere with the rights of princes, or diminish their obligation to attend to those salutary regulations which are established for the protection of innocence, and the punishment of the guilty. That this only was the intention of the writer, may be inferred from the considerations he adduces to strengthen his advice. He does not draw his arguments for submission from any thing *peculiar* to the *christian system*, as he must have done, had he intended to oppose that religion to the natural rights of mankind, but from the utility and necessity of civil restraints. "The Ruler is the Minister of God to thee for good," is the reason he urges for submission. Civil government, as if he had said, is a salutary institution, appointed to restrain and punish outrage and injustice, but exhibiting to the quiet and inoffensive, nothing of which they need to be afraid. "If thou doest that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain." He is an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Christians were not to consider themselves privileged above their fellow-citizens, as their religion conferred upon them no civil immunities, but left them subject to all the ties and restraints, whatever they were, which could be justly imposed by the civil power on any other part of mankind.

The limits of every duty must be determined by its *reasons*, and the only ones assigned *here*, or that *can* be assigned for submission to civil authority, are its *tendency to do good;* wherever therefore this shall cease to be the case, submission becomes absurd, having no longer any *rational view*. But at what time this evil shall be judged to have arrived, or what remedy it may be proper to apply, christianity does not decide, but leaves to be determined by an appeal to natural reason and right. By one of the strangest misconceptions in the world, when we are taught that christianity does not bestow upon us any *new* rights, it has been thought to strip us of our *old;* which is just the same as it would be to conclude, because it did not first furnish us with hands or feet, it obliges us to cut them off.

Under every form of government, that civil order which affords protection to property, and tranquillity to individuals, must be obeyed; and I have no doubt, that before the revolution in France, they who are now its warmest admirers, had they lived there, would have yielded a quiet submission to its laws, as being conscious the social compact can only be considered as dissolved by an expression of the general will. In the mean time, they would have continued firm in avowing the principles of freedom, and by the diffusion of political knowledge, have endeavoured to train and prepare the minds of their fellow-citizens for accomplishing a change so desirable.

It is not necessary to enter into a particular examination of the other texts adduced by Mr. ——— in support of his sentiments, as this in Romans is by much the most to his purpose, and the remarks that have been made upon it may, with very little alteration, be applied to the rest. He refers us to the second chapter of the first Epistle of Peter. "Submit yourselves to every "ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be "to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto "them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil "doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Here it is sufficient to remark, all that can be inferred from this passage is, that christians are not to hold themselves exempt from the obligation of obedience on account of their religion, but are to respect legislation as far as it is found productive of benefit in social life.

With still less propriety, he urges the first of Timothy, where, in the second chapter, we are "exhorted "to supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of

"thanks for all men, for kings, and for all that are in "authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable "life, in all godliness and honesty." I am unacquainted with any who refuse a compliance with this apostolical admonition, except the nonjurors* may be reckoned of this class, whose political sentiments are of a piece with our author's.

Whilst he pleads with so much eagerness for the duty of passive obedience, we are not, however, to suppose, he wishes to extend it to all mankind. He admits, *that society, under the wisest regulations, will degenerate, and there will be periods when associated bodies must be resolved again into their first principles.* All resistance to authority, every revolution, is not in his own opinion criminal; it is christians only, who are never to have a share in these transactions, never to assert their rights. With what different sentiments did the apostle of the Gentiles contemplate his character, when disdaining to accept a clandestine dismission from an unjust imprisonment, he felt a glow of indignant pride burn upon his cheek, and exclaimed with a Roman energy, "I was free born!"

2d. Another reason which this author assigns for a blind deference to civil authority is, that christianity is *distinct from and independent of human legislation.* This principle no protestant dissenter will be inclined to question, but, instead of lending any support to the system of passive obedience, it will overturn it from its foundation; for if religion be really distinct from, and independent of human legislation, it cannot afford any standard to ascertain its limits; as the moment it is applied to this purpose, it ceases to be a thing distinct and independent. For example, it is not doubted that a christian may lawfully engage in trade or commerce; but if it be asked why his profession does not interfere with such an undertaking, the proper reply will be, religion is a thing distinct and independent. Should it be again inquired, why a christian may become a trader,

* There are now no "nonjurors:" the people once so called have for many years prayed for the king.—Ed.

yet must not commit a theft, we should answer, that this latter action is not a thing distinct, or independent of religion, but falls immediately under its cognizance, as a violation of its laws. Thus it appears, that whatever portion of human conduct is really *independent* of religion, is lawful for that *very reason*, and can then only become criminal or improper, when it is suffered to intrench upon more sacred or important duties. The truth is, between two institutions, such as civil government and religion, which have a separate origin and end, no opposition can subsist, but in the brain of a distempered enthusiast.

The author's text confutes his doctrine, for had our Saviour annihilated our rights, he would have become a *judge* and *divider* over us, in the worst sense, if that could be said to be divided which is taken away. When any two institutions are affirmed to be distinct and independent, it can only mean, they do not *interfere;* but that must be a genius of no common size, who can infer from religion not *interfering* with the rights of mankind, that they cease to be, or that the patrimony, over which our Lord declined to exercise *any authority*, he has scattered and destroyed.

3d. Similar to the last I have considered, is that pretence for excluding christians from any concern in political affairs, taken from the conduct of our Saviour. Mr. ——— tells us, that Christ uniformly waived interesting himself in the concerns of the then existing government; and to the same purpose he afterwards remarks, he always declined the functions of a civil magistrate.

The most careless reader will remark, the whole weight of this argument rests upon a supposition, that it is unlawful for a christian to sustain any other character in civil life, than that in which our Saviour literally appeared; a notion as extravagant as was ever nourished in the brain of the wildest fanatic. Upon this principle he must have gone through such a succession of offices, and engaged in such an endless variety of undertakings, that in place of thirty-three years, he needed to have

lived thirty-three centuries. On this ground the profession of physic is unlawful for a christian, because our Lord never set up a dispensary; and that of law, because he never pleaded at the bar. Next to the weakness of advancing such absurdity, is that of confuting it.

4th. The author, in proof of his political tenets, appeals to the devotional feelings of his hearers. "I ask "you," says he, "who make conscience of entering into "your closets, and shutting your doors, and praying to "your Father which seeth in secret; what subjects in-"terest you most then? Are not factious passions hush-"ed; the undue heat you felt in political disputation "remembered with sorrow?" He must be at a great loss for argument, who will have recourse to such loose and flimsy declamation. When engaged in devout admiration of the Supreme Being, every other object will be lost in the comparison; but this, though the noblest employment of the mind, was never intended to shut out all other concerns.

The affections which unite us to the world have a large demand upon us, and must succeed in their turn. If every thing is to be deemed criminal that does not interest the attention in the very moment of worship, political concerns are not the only ones to be abandoned, but every undertaking of a temporal nature, all labour and ingenuity must cease. Science herself must shroud her light. These are notions rather to be laughed at than confuted, for their extravagance will correct itself. Every attempt that has been made to rear religion on the ruins of nature, or to render it subversive of the economy of life, has hitherto proved unsuccessful, whilst the institutions that have flowed from it, are now scarcely regarded in any other light than as humiliating monuments of human weakness and folly. The natural vigour of the mind, when it has once been opened by knowledge, and turned towards great and interesting objects, will always overpower the illusions of fanaticism; or, could Mr. ———'s principles be carried into effect, we should soon behold men returning again to the state of savages, and a more than monkish barbarity and ignorance would

overspread the earth. That abstraction from the world it is his purpose to recommend, is in truth as inconsistent with the nature of religion, as with the state and condition of man; for christianity does not propose to take us *out* of the world, but to preserve us from the pollutions which are *in* it.

It is easy to brand a passion for liberty with the odious epithet of faction; no two things, however, can be more opposite. Faction is a combination of a few to oppress the liberties of many; the love of freedom is the impulse of an enlightened and presiding spirit, ever intent upon the welfare of the community, or body to which it belongs, and ready to give the alarm, when it beholds any unlawful conspiracy formed, whether it be of rulers or of subjects, with a design to oppress it. Every tory upholds a faction; every whig, as far as he is sincere and well informed, is a friend to the equal liberties of mankind. Absurd as the preacher's appeal must appear, on such an occasion, to the devout feelings of his hearers, we have no need to decline it. In those solemn moments, factious passions cannot indeed be too much hushed, but that warmth which animates the patriot, which glowed in the breast of a Sidney or a Hampden, was never chilled, or diminished, we may venture to affirm, in its nearest approaches to the uncreated splendour; and if it mingled with their devotion at all, could not fail to infuse into it a fresh force and vigour, by drawing them into a closer assimilation to that great Being, who appears under the character of the avenger of the oppressed, and the friend and protector of the human race.

5th. Lastly, the author endeavours to discredit the principles of freedom, by holding them up as intimately connected with the unitarian heresy. "We are not to "be surprised," he says, "if men who vacate the rule "of faith in Jesus Christ, should be defective in defer-"ence and in obedient regards to men, who are raised "to offices of superior influence, for the purposes of civil "order and public good." The persons he has in view are the unitarians, and that my reader may be in full

possession of this most curious argument, it may be proper to inform him, that an unitarian is a person who believes Jesus Christ had no existence till he appeared on our earth, whilst a trinitarian maintains, that he existed with the Father from all eternity. What possible connexion can he discern between these opinions and the subject of government?

In order to determine whether the supreme power should be vested in king, lords, and commons, as in England, in an assembly of nobles, as in Venice, or in a house of representatives, as in America or France, must we first decide upon the person of Christ? I should imagine we might as well apply to astronomy first, to learn whether the earth flattens at the poles. He explains what he means by *vacating* the rule of faith in Christ, when he charges the unitarians with a partial denial at least, of the inspiration of the Scripture, particularly the Epistles of St. Paul. But, however clear the inspiration of the Scriptures may be, as no one pleads for the inspiration of civil governors, the deference which is due to the first, as coming from God, can be no reason for an unlimited submission to the latter. Yet this is Mr. ———'s argument, and it runs thus. Every opposition to scripture is criminal, because it is inspired, and therefore every resistance to temporal rulers is criminal, though they are *not* inspired.

The number of passages in Paul's Epistles which treat of civil government is small, the principal of them have been examined, and whether they are inspired or not, has not the remotest relation to the question before us. The inspiration of an author adds weight to his sentiments, but makes no alteration in his meaning, and unless Mr. ——— can show that Paul inculcates unlimited submission, the belief of his inspiration can yield no advantage to his cause. Amongst those parties of christians who have maintained the inspiration of the Scriptures in its utmost extent, the number of such as have inferred from them the doctrine of passive obedience has been extremely small; it is, therefore, ridiculous to impute the rejection of this tenet by unitarians to a disbelief of plenary inspiration. It behoves Mr. ——— to point out, if he is able, any one of the unitarians, who ever imagined that Paul means to recommend unlimited obedience; for till that is the case, it is plain their political opinions cannot have arisen from any contempt of that apostle's authority.

As there is no foundation in the nature of things, for imagining any alliance between heretical tenets and the principles of freedom, this notion is equally void of support from fact or history. Were the socinian sentiments, in particular, productive of any *peculiar impatience under* the restraints of government, this effect could not fail of having made its appearance on their first rise in Poland, while their influence was fresh and vigorous; but nothing of this nature occurred, nor was any such reproach cast upon them. That sect in England which has been always most conspicuous for the love of freedom, has for the most part held sentiments at the greatest remove from socinianism that can be imagined. The seeds of those political principles which broke out with such vigour in the reign of Charles the First, and have since given rise to the denomination of whigs, were sown in the latter end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by the hand of the puritans, amongst whom the unitarian doctrine was then utterly unknown. The dissenters descended from those illustrious ancestors, and inheriting their spirit, have been foremost in defence of liberty, not only, or chiefly, of late, since the spread of the socinian doctrine, but before that system had gained any footing amongst us.

The knowledge and study of the Scriptures, far from favouring the pretensions of despotism, have almost ever diminished it, and been attended with a proportional increase of freedom. The union of protestant princes preserved the liberties of the Germanic body, when they were in danger of being overwhelmed by the victorious arm of Charles the Fifth; yet a veneration for the Scriptures, at a time when they had almost fallen into oblivion, and an appeal to their decisions in all points, was the grand characteristic of the new religion. If we look

into Turkey, we shall find the least of that impatience under restraints which Mr. ——— laments, of any place in the world, though Paul and his epistles are not much studied there.

There are not wanting reasons, which at first view, might induce us to conclude unitarianism was less favourable to the love of freedom than almost any other system of religious belief. If any party of christians were ever free from the least tincture of enthusiasm, it is the unitarian: yet that passion has by every philosopher been judged friendly to liberty; and to its influence, though perhaps improperly, some of its most distinguished exertions have been ascribed. Hume and Bolingbroke, who were atheists, leaned towards arbitrary power. Owen, Howe, Milton, Baxter, some of the most devout and venerable characters that ever appeared, were warmly attached to liberty, and held sentiments on the subject of government as free and unfettered as Dr. Priestley. Thus every pretence for confounding the attachment to freedom with the sentiments of a religious party, is most abundantly confuted both from reason and from fact. The zeal unitarians have displayed in defence of civil and religious liberty, is the spirit natural to a minority, who are well aware they are viewed by the ecclesiastical powers with an unparalleled malignity and rancour. Let the dissenters at large remember they too are a minority, a great minority, and that they must look for their security from the same quarter, not from the compliments of bishops, or presents from maids of honour.*

To abandon principles which the best and most enlightened men have in all ages held sacred, which the dissenters in particular have rendered themselves illustrious by defending, which have been sealed and consecrated by the blood of our ancestors, for no other reason

* Some of my readers perhaps need to be informed that I here allude to Mr. Martin, who, for similar services to those Mr. ——— is now performing, has been considerably caressed by certain bishops, who have condescended to notice and to visit him. I think we do not read that Judas had any acquaintance with the high priests till he came to transact business with them.

than that the unitarians chance to maintain them, would be a weakness of which a child might be ashamed! Whoever may think fit to take up the gauntlet in the socinian controversy will have my warmest good wishes; but let us not employ those arms against each other which were given us for our common defence.

Section IV.

On the Test Act.

Amidst all the wild eccentricities which, abounding in every part of this extraordinary publication, naturally diminish our wonder at any thing such a writer may advance, I confess I am surprised at his declaring his wish for the continuance of the Test Act. This law, enacted in the latter end of the reign of Charles the Second, to secure the nation from popery, when it stood upon the brink of that precipice, is continued, now that the danger no longer exists which first occasioned it, for the express purpose of preserving the church from the inroads of dissenters. That church, it must be remembered, existed for ages before it received any such protection; yet it is now the vogue to magnify its importance to that degree, that one would imagine it was its sole prop, whose removal would draw the whole fabric after it, or at least make it totter to its base. Whether these apprehensions were really entertained by the clergy who gave the signal for the commencement of hostilities on a late occasion, or whether they were only impelled by that illiberal tincture and fixed antipathy to all who differ from them, which hath ever marked their character, may be doubted; but to behold a dissenting minister joining with them in an unnatural warfare against his brethren, is a phenomenon so curious, that it prompts us to inquire into its cause. Let us hear his reasons. He and many others were convinced, he tells us, "that some of the "persons who applied for the repeal were influenced by "enmity against the doctrinal articles of the established

"church, and they could not sacrifice their pious regard "to truth, though in a church they had separated from, "to the policy of men, who, with respect to God our "Saviour, only consult how they may cast him down "from his excellency." When we hear the clergy exclaim that their church is in danger, we pretty well understand what they mean; they speak broad, as Mr. Burke says, and intend no more than that its emoluments are endangered; but when a serious dissenter expresses his pious regard to the doctrines of the church, it is the *truth* of those articles he must be supposed to have in view. Let us consider for a moment what advantage the Test Act is capable of yielding them. All those who qualify for civil offices, by a submission to this law, consist of two classes of people; they are either persons who are attached to the articles of the church, from whom therefore no danger could accrue; or they are persons who have signified their assent to doctrines which they inwardly disapprove, and who have qualified themselves for trust by a solemn act of religious deception. It is this latter class alone, it should be remembered, whom the Test Act can at all influence, and thus the only security this celebrated law can afford the articles of the church, is founded in a flagrant violation of truth in the persons who become their guarantees. Every attempt that has been made to uphold religion by the civil arm, has reflected disgrace upon its authors; but of all that are recorded in the history of the world, perhaps this is the most absurd in its principle, and the least effectual in its operation. For the truth of sacred mysteries in religion, it appeals to the corruptest principles of the human heart, and to those *only;* for no one can be tempted by the Test Act to profess an attachment to the doctrines of the church, till he has been already allured by the dignity or emolument of a civil office. By compelling all who exercise any function in the state, from the person who aspires to its highest distinctions, to those who fill the meanest offices in it, to profess that concurrence in religious opinions which is known never to exist, it is adapted beyond any other human invention, to spread

amongst all orders of men a contempt for sacred institutions, to enthrone hypocrisy, and reduce deception to a system! The truth of any set of opinions can only be perceived by *evidence*; but what evidence can any one derive from the mere mechanical action of receiving bread and wine at the hands of a parish priest? He who believes them already needs not to be initiated by any such ceremony; and by what magic touch those simple elements are to convert the unbeliever, our author, who is master of so many secrets, has not condescended to explain. He will not pretend to impute the first spread of these doctrines in the infancy of the christian religion, or their revival at the reformation, to any such means, since he imagines he can trace them in the New Testament. It is strange if that evidence which was powerful enough to introduce them where they were unknown, is not sufficient to uphold them where they are already professed and believed. At least, the Test Act, it must be confessed, has yielded them no advantage, for they have been controverted with more acrimony, and admitted by a smaller number of persons, since that law was enacted, than in any period preceding.

Were the removal of this test to overthrow the establishment itself, a consequence at the same time in the highest degree improbable, the articles of the church, if they are true, would remain unendangered, their evidence would continue unimpaired, an appeal to the inspired writings from which they profess to be derived would be open, the liberty of discussion would be admitted in as great an extent as at present; this difference only would occur, that an attachment to them would no longer be suspected of flowing from corrupt and sinister motives. They would cease to be with the clergy, the ladder of promotion, the cant of the pulpit, the ridicule of the schools. The futility of this or any other law, as a security to religious doctrines, may be discerned from this single reflection, that in the national church its own articles have, for a length of time, been either treated with contempt, or maintained with little sincerity, and no

zeal; whilst amongst the dissenters, where they have had no such aids, they have found a congenial soil, and continue to flourish with vigour.

On the political complexion of this test, as it does not fall so properly within my present view, I shall content myself with remarking, that harmless as it may appear at first sight, it carries in it the seeds of all the persecutions and calamities which have ever been sustained on a religious account. It proscribes not an individual who has been convicted of a crime, but a whole party, as unfit to be trusted by the community to which they belong; and if this stigma can be justly fixed on any set of men, it ought not to stop *here, or any where*, short of the actual excision of those who are thus considered as rotten and incurable members of the political body. In annexing to religious speculation the idea of political default, the principle of this law would justify every excess of severity and rigour. If we are the persons it supposes, its indulgence is weak and contemptible; if we are of a different description, the nature of its pretensions is so extraordinary as to occasion serious alarm, and call aloud for its repeal.

Mr. ———, indeed, calls this, and similar laws, a restraint very prudently imposed upon those who dissent from the established religion.* This restraint, however, is no less than a political annihilation, debarring them, though their talents were ever so splendid, from mingling in the counsels, or possessing any share in the administration of their country. With that natural relish for absurdity, which characterizes this author, he imagines they have justly incurred this evil for dissenting from an *erroneous* religion.

He tells us, in the course of his sermon,† that the grand "principle of separation from the church lies in the unworldly nature of our Saviour's kingdom." This reason for separation implies, that any attempt to blend worldly interests or policy with the constitution of a church, is improper; but how could this be done more

* Page 6. † Page 35.

effectually than by rendering the profession of its articles a preliminary step to every kind of civil pre-eminence? Yet this abuse, which in his own estimation is so enormous as to form the great basis of separation, he wishes to perpetuate; and all things considered, hopes "that which is at rest will not be disturbed." In another part of his discourse,* he asks what temporalities has the church of Christ to expect? It is the mother of harlots, which says, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Would any one imagine this was the language of a man, who, in pleading for a Test Act, has rested the support of his creed on those very temporalities he affects so much to disdain, and has committed his religion to the arms of that mother of harlots to be reared and nourished! When speaking of the Test Act in the seventh page of his discourse, he thus expresses himself: "Surely the cross of Christ ought not to be insulted by persons eager to press into the temple of Mammon." Who could treat it with more poignant severity than is couched in this declaration? yet this is the language of a person who desires its continuance. In truth, his representations on this subject are pregnant with such contradictions, and rise above each other in so singular a gradation of absurdity, as will not be easily conceived, and perhaps hath scarce ever been equalled. At the very outset of his sermon, he declares, "Whenever the gospel is secularized it is debased and misrepresented, and in proportion to the quantity of foreign infusions is the efficacy of this saving health diminished." But human ingenuity would be at a loss to contrive a method of secularizing the gospel more completely, than by rendering it the common passport of all who aspire to civil distinctions. I am really weary of exposing the wild and extravagant incoherence of such a reasoner. From a man, who, professing to be the apologist of his party, betrays its interests, and exhibits its most illustrious members to reproach; who, himself a dissenter, applauds the penalties which the hierarchy has inflicted as a "*pru-*

* Page 26.

dent restraint;" who, with the utmost poignance, censures a law which he solemnly invokes the legislature to perpetuate; and proposes to secure the truths of religion, by the "profanation of its sacraments,"* by "debasing the gospel," and "insulting the cross;" any thing may be expected but consistence and decency. When such an author assures us he was not impelled by vanity to publish,† we may easily give him credit; but he should remember, though it may be a virtue to subdue vanity, it is base to extinguish shame. The tear which, he tells us, started from the eyes of his audience, we will hope, for their honour, was an effusion of regret, natural to his friends, on hearing him deliver sentiments which they considered as a disgrace to himself, and a calumny on his brethren. His affecting to pour contempt upon Dr. Price, whose talents and character were revered by all parties, and to hold him up as the *corrupter* of the dissenters, will not fail to awaken the indignation of every generous mind. Whether *they* were greater friends to their country, whose pride and oppression scattered the flames of discord across the Atlantic, poured desolation into the colonies, dismembered the empire, and involved us in millions of debt; or the man, who, with a warning voice, endeavoured to avert those calamities, posterity will decide.

He gives us a pompous enumeration ‡ of the piety, learning, and talents of a large body of his brethren who concur with him in a disapprobation of the theological and political tenets of the unitarians. The weakness of mingling them together has been shown already; but if these great and eminent men, whom the world never heard of before, possess that zeal for their religion they pretend, let them meet their opponents on the open field of controversy, where they may display their talents and prowess to somewhat more advantage than in *skulking* behind a *consecrated altar*.

There are many particulars, in the address and sermon, of an extraordinary complexion, which I have not

* Page 8. † Page 6. ‡ Ibid.

noticed at all, as it was not my intention to follow the author step by step, but rather to collect his scattered representations into some leading points of view. For the same reason, I make no remarks on his barbarous imagery; or his style, every where incoherent and incorrect, sometimes indecent, which cannot fail of disgusting every reader of taste. In a rude daubing peculiar to himself, where, in ridicule of Dr. Priestley, he has grouped together a *foreigner*, a *ship*, and *cargo* of *drugs*, he has unfortunately sketched his own likeness, except in the circumstance of the *ship*, with tolerable accuracy; for, without the apology of having been *shipped* into England, he is certainly a *foreigner* in his native tongue, and his publication will be allowed to be a *drug*.

Had he known to apply the remark with which his address commences, on the utility of accommodating instruction to the exigence of times, he would have been aware, that this is not a season for drawing off the eyes of mankind from political objects. They were, in fact, never turned towards them with equal ardour, and we may venture to affirm, they will long continue to take that direction. An attention to the political aspect of the world, is not now the fruit of an idle curiosity, or the amusement of a dissipated and frivolous mind, but is awakened and kept alive by occurrences as various as they are extraordinary. There are times when the moral world seems to stand still; there are others when it seems impelled towards its goal, with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting, perhaps, than any which has been known, in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close.* Events have taken place, of late, and revolutions have been effected, which, had they been foretold a very few years ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extrava-

* This glowing picture, as accurately descriptive of recent events as of those it was intended to portray, might tempt us almost to fancy, that, after the revolution of a cycle of forty years, time had brought us back to the same state of things.—Ed.

gant; and their influence is yet far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of being contemplated, with the profoundest attention, by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary! These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature, to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Institutions which have been long held in veneration, as the most sublime refinements of human wisdom and policy, which age hath cemented and confirmed, which power hath supported, which eloquence hath conspired to embellish and opulence to enrich, are falling fast into decay. New prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch farther than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach.

Some beneficial effects appear to have taken place already, sufficient to nourish our most sanguine hope of benefits much more extensive. The mischief and folly of wars begin to be understood, and that mild and liberal system of policy adopted, which has ever indeed been the object of prayer to the humane and the devout, but has hitherto remained utterly unknown in the cabinets of princes. As the mind naturally yields to the impression of objects which it contemplates often, we need not wonder, if, amidst events so extraordinary, the human character itself should appear to be altering and improving apace. That fond attachment to ancient institutions, and blind submission to opinions already received, which has ever checked the growth of improvement, and drawn on the greatest benefactors of mankind danger or neglect, is giving way to a spirit of bold and fearless investigation. Man seems to be becoming more erect and

independent. He leans more on himself, less on his fellow-creatures. He begins to feel a consciousness in a higher degree of personal dignity, and is less enamoured of artificial distinctions. There is some hope of our beholding that simplicity and energy of character which marks his natural state, blended with the humanity, the elegance, and improvement of polished society.

The events which have already taken place, and the further changes they forebode, will open to the contemplative of every character, innumerable sources of reflection. To the philosopher they present many new and extraordinary facts, where his penetration will find ample scope in attempting to discover their cause, and to predict their effects. He will have an opportunity of viewing mankind in an interesting situation, and of tracing the progress of opinion through channels it has rarely flowed in before. The politician will feel his attention powerfully awakened, on seeing new maxims of policy introduced, new institutions established, and such a total alteration in the ideas of a great part of the world, as will oblige him to study the art of government as it were afresh. The devout mind will behold in these momentous changes the finger of God, and, discerning in them the dawn of that glorious period, in which wars will cease, and antichristian tyranny shall fall, will adore that unerring wisdom, whose secret operation never fails to conduct all human affairs to their proper issue, and impels the great actors on that troubled theatre, to fulfil, when they least intend it, the counsels of heaven, and the predictions of its prophets.

AN APOLOGY

FOR THE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS,

AND FOR

GENERAL LIBERTY:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

REMARKS ON BISHOP HORSLEY'S SERMON.

Preached on the 30th January, 1793.

[PUBLISHED IN 1793.]

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

Since this pamphlet was first published, the principles it aims to support have received confirmation from such a train of disastrous events, that it might have been hoped we should have learned those lessons from misfortunes which reason had failed to impress. Uninstructed by our calamities, we still persist in an impious attack on the liberties of France, and are eager to take our part in the great drama of crimes which is acting on the continent of Europe. Meantime the violence and injustice of the internal administration keeps pace with our iniquities abroad. Liberty and truth are silenced. An unrelenting system of persecution prevails. The cruel and humiliating sentence passed upon Mr. Muir and Mr. Palmer, men of unblemished morals and of the purest patriotism, the outrages committed on Dr. Priestley, and his intended removal to America, are events which will mark the latter end of the eighteenth century with indelible reproach. But what has liberty to expect from a minister, who has the audacity to assert the King's right to land as many foreign troops as he pleases, without the previous consent of Parliament? If this doctrine be true, the boasted equilibrium of the constitution, all the barriers which the wisdom of our ancestors have opposed to the encroachments of arbitrary power, are idle, ineffectual precautions. For we have only to suppose for a moment, an inclination in the royal breast to overturn our liberties, and of what avail is the nicest internal arrangement against a foreign force? Our constitution, on this principle, is the absurdest sys-

tem that was ever conceived; pretending liberty for its object, yet providing no security against the great antagonist and destroyer of liberty, the employment of military power by the chief magistrate. Let a foreign army be introduced into this or any other country, and quartered upon the subject without his consent, and what is there wanting, if such were the design of the prince to complete the subjection of that country? Will armed foreigners be overawed by written laws or unwritten customs, by the legal limitations of power, the paper lines of demarcation? But Mr. Pitt contends that though the sovereign may land foreign troops at his pleasure, he cannot subsist them without the aid of Parliament. He may overrun his dominions with a mercenary army, it seems, but after he has subdued his subjects, he is compelled to have recourse to them for supplies. What a happy contrivance! Unfortunately, however, it is found that princes with the unlimited command of armies, have hit upon a nearer and more efficacious method of raising supplies than by an act of Parliament. But it is needless any farther to expose the effrontery, or detect the sophistry, of this shameless apostate. The character of Pitt is written in sunbeams. A veteran in frauds while in the bloom of youth, betraying first, and then persecuting, his earliest friends and connexions, falsifying every promise, and violating every political engagement, ever making the fairest professions a prelude to the darkest actions, punishing with the utmost rigour the publisher of the identical paper he himself had circulated,* are traits in the conduct of Pitt which entitle him to a fatal preeminence in guilt. The qualities of this man balance in an extraordinary manner, and sustain each other: the influence of his station, the extent of his enormities, invest him with a kind of splendour, and the contempt we feel for his meanness and duplicity, is lost in the dread of his machinations,

* Mr. Holt, a printer, at Newark, is now imprisoned in Newgate for two years, for reprinting verbatim, An Address to the People on Reform, which was sanctioned for certain, and probably written by the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt.

and the abhorrence of his crimes. Too long has he insulted the patience of his countrymen; nor ought we, when we observe the indifference with which the iniquities of Pitt's administration are viewed, to reproach the Romans for tamely submitting to the tyranny of Caligula or Domitian.

We had fondly hoped a mild philosophy was about to diffuse over the globe, the triumph of liberty and peace. But, alas! these hopes are fled. The continent presents little but one wide picture of desolation, misery, and crimes: *on the earth distress of nations and perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*

That the seeds of public convulsion are sown in every country of Europe (our own not excepted) it were vain to deny; seeds which without the wisest precautions, and the most conciliating councils, will break out, it is to be feared, in the overthrow of all governments. How this catastrophe may be averted, or how, should that be impossible, its evils may be mitigated and diminished, demands the deepest consideration of every European statesman. The ordinary routine of ministerial chicanery is quite unequal to the task. A philosophic comprehension of mind, which, leaving the beaten road of politics, shall adapt itself to new situations, and profit by the vicissitudes of opinion, equally removed from an attachment to antiquated forms, and useless innovations, capable of rising above the emergency of the moment, to the most remote consequences of a transaction; combining the past, the present, and the future, and knowing how to defend with firmness, or concede with dignity; these are the qualities which the situation of Europe renders indispensable. It would be a mockery of our present ministry to ask whether *they* possess those qualities.

With respect to the following Apology for the Freedom of the Press, the author begs leave to claim the reader's indulgence to its numerous imperfections, and hopes he will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expressions, it is an eulogium on a *dead friend.*

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

THE accidental detention of the following pamphlet in the press longer than was expected, gave me an opportunity before it was published, of seeing Bishop Horsley's Sermon, preached before the House of Lords, on the 30th of January, and as its contents are relevant to my subject, a few remarks upon it may not be improper. His Lordship sets out with a severe censure of that *freedom of dispute*, on matters of *such high importance as the origin of government, and the authority of sovereigns*, in which he laments it has been the *fol'y of this country for several years past* to indulge. If his Lordship has not inquired into those subjects himself, he can with little propriety pretend to decide in so imperious and peremptory a manner; unless it be a privilege of his office to dogmatise without examination, or he has discovered some nearer road to truth than that of reasoning and argument. It seems a favourite point with a certain description of men, to stop the progress of inquiry, and throw mankind back into the darkness of the middle ages, from a persuasion, that ignorance will augment their power, as objects look largest in a mist. There is, in reality, no other foundation for that alarm which the Bishop expresses. Whatever is not comprehended under revelation, falls under the inspection of reason; and since from the whole course of providence, it is evident, that all political events, and all the revolutions of government, are effected by the instrumentality of men, there is no room for supposing them too sacred to be submitted to the human faculties. The more minds there are employed in tracing their principles and effects,

the greater probability will there be of the science of civil policy, as well as every other, attaining to perfection.

Bishop Horsley, determined to preserve the character of an original, presents us with a new set of political principles, and endeavours to place the exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance upon a new foundation. By a curious distinction between the *ground* of authority and of obedience, he rests the former on human compact, the latter on divine obligation. *It is easy to understand*, he says, *that the principle of the private citizen's submission must be quite a distinct thing from the principle of the sovereign's public title. And for this plain reason: The principle of submission, to bind the conscience of every individual, must be something universally known.* He then proceeds to inform us, that the kingly title in England is founded on the act of settlement; but that as thousands and tens of thousands of the people have never heard of that act, the principle which compels their allegiance, must be something distinct from it, with which they may all be acquainted. In this reasoning, he evidently confounds the obligation of an *individual* to submit to the existing authority, with that of the community collectively considered. For *any particular number* of persons to set themselves by force to oppose the established practice of a state, is a plain violation of the laws of morality, as it would be productive of the utmost disorder; and no government could stand, were it permitted to individuals to counteract the general will, of which, in ordinary cases, legal usages are the interpreter. In the worst state of political society, if a people have not sufficient wisdom or courage to correct its evils and assert their liberty, the attempt of individuals to *force* improvements upon them is a presumption which merits the severest punishment. Social order would be inevitably dissolved, if every man declined a practical acquiescence in that political regulation which he did not personally approve. The duty of submission is, in this light, founded on principles which hold under every government, and are plain and obvious. But the principle which attaches a people to their alle-

giance, collectively considered, must exactly coincide with the title to authority; as must be evident from the very meaning of the term authority, which, as distinguished from force, signifies a right to demand obedience. Authority and obedience are correlative terms, and consequently in all respects correspond, and are commensurate with each other.

The divine right, his Lordship says, *of the first magistrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience, is not of that sort which it were high treason to claim for the sovereign of this country. It is a right which in no country can be denied, without the highest of all treasons. The denial of it were treason against the paramount authority of God.* To invest any human power with these high epithets, is ridiculous, at least, if not impious. The right of a prince to the obedience of his subjects, wherever it exists, may be called divine, because we know the Divine Being is the patron of justice and order; but in that sense the authority of a petty constable is equally divine; nor can the term be applied with any greater propriety to supreme than to subordinate magistrates. As to "*submission being among the general rules which proceed from the will of God, and have been impressed upon the conscience of every man by the original constitution of the world,*" nothing more is comprehended under this pomp of words, than that submission is, for the most part, a duty—a sublime and interesting discovery! The minds of princes are seldom of the firmest texture; and they who fill their heads with the magnificent chimera of divine right, prepare a victim where they intend a god. Some species of government is essential to the well-being of mankind; submission to some species of government is consequently a duty; but what kind of government shall be appointed, and to what limits submission shall extend, are mere human questions, to be adjusted by mere human reason and contrivance.

As the natural consequence of divine right, his Lordship proceeds to inculcate the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, in the most unqualified terms; assuming it as a principle to be acted upon under governments the most oppressive, in which he endeavours to shelter himself under the authority of Paul. The apostolic exhortation, as addressed to a few individuals, and adapted to the local circumstances of christians at that period, admits an easy solution; but to imagine it prescribes the duty of the Roman empire, and is intended to subject millions to the capricious tyranny of one man, is a reflection as well on the character of Paul as on christianity itself.

On principles of reason, the only way to determine the agreement of any thing with the will of God, is to consider its influence on the happiness of society; so that, in this view, the question of passive obedience is reduced to a simple issue: Is it best for the human race that every tyrant and usurper be submitted to without check or control? It ought likewise to be remembered, that if the doctrine of passive obedience be true, princes should be taught it, and instructed, that to whatever excesses of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no resistance on the part of the people. If this maxim appear to be conducive to general good, we may fairly presume it concurs with the will of the Deity; but if it appear pregnant with the most mischievous consequences, it must disclaim such support. From the known perfection of God, we conclude he wills the happiness of mankind; and that though he condescends not to interpose miraculously, that kind of civil polity is most pleasing in his eye, which is productive of the greatest felicity.

On a comparison of free with arbitrary governments, we perceive the former are distinguished from the latter, by imparting a much greater share of happiness to those who live under them; and this in a manner too uniform to be imputed to chance or secret causes. He who wills the end, must will the means which ascertain it. His Lordship endeavours to diminish the dread of despotic government, by observing, that in its worst state it is attended with more good than ill, and that the *end of government, under all its abuses, is generally answered by it.* Admitting this to be true, it is, at best, but a consolation

proper to be applied where there is no remedy, and affords no reason why we should not mitigate political as well as other evils, when it lies in our power. We endeavour to correct the diseases of the eye, or of any other organ, though the malady be not such as renders it useless.

The doctrine of passive obedience is so repugnant to the genuine feelings of human nature, that it can never be completely acted on: a secret dread that popular vengeance will awake, and nature assert her rights, imposes a restraint which the most determined despotism is not able to shake off. The rude reason of the multitude may be perplexed, but the sentiments of the heart are not easily perverted.

In adjusting the different parts of his theory, the learned Bishop appears a good deal embarrassed. *It will be readily admitted*, he says (p. 9), *that of all sovereigns, none reign by so fair and just a title, as those who derive their claim from some such public act (as the act of settlement) of the nation which they govern.* That there are different degrees in *justice*, and even in *divine right* (which his Lordship declares all sovereigns possess,) is a very singular idea. Common minds would be ready to imagine, however various the modes of *injustice* may be, *justice* were a thing absolute and invariable, nor would they conceive how *a divine right, a right the denial of which is high treason against the authority of God*, can be increased by the act of a nation. But this is not all. It is no just inference (he tells us) that the obligation upon the private citizen to submit himself to the authority thus raised, arises wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the person on whom it is conferred. But if the sovereign derives his claim from this act of the nation, how comes it that the obligation of the people to submit to his claim does not spring from the same act? Because *in all these cases*, he affirms, *the act of the people is only the means which Providence employs to advance the new sovereign to his station.* In the hand of the Supreme Being, the whole agency of men may be considered as

an *instrument;* but to make it appear that the right of dominion is independent of the people, men must be shown to be instruments in political affairs, in a more absolute sense than ordinary. A divine interposition of a more immediate kind must be shown, or the mere consideration of God's being the original source of all power, will be a weak reason for absolute submission. Anarchy may have *power* as well as despotism, and is equally a link in the great chain of causes and effects.

It is not a little extraordinary, that Bishop Horsley, the apologist of tyranny, the patron of passive obedience, should affect to admire the British constitution, whose freedom was attained by a palpable violation of the principles for which he contends. He will not say the Barons at Runnemede acted on his maxims, in extorting the Magna Charta from King John, or in demanding its confirmation from Henry the Third. If he approves of their conduct, he gives up his cause, and is compelled, at least, to confess the principles of passive obedience were not true at that time; if he disapproves of their conduct, he must, to be consistent, reprobate the restraints which it imposed on kingly power. The limitations of monarchy, which his Lordship pretends to applaud, were effected by resistance; the freedom of the British constitution flowed from a departure from passive obedience, and was therefore stained with high treason *against the authority of God.* To these conclusions he must inevitably come, unless he can point out something peculiar to the spot of Runnemede, or to the reign of King John, which confines the exception, to the general doctrine of submission, to that particular time and place. With whatever colours the advocates of passive obedience may varnish their theories, they must of necessity be enemies to the British constitution. Its spirit they detest; its corruptions they cherish; and if at present they affect a zeal for its preservation, it is only because they despair of any form of government being erected in its stead, which will give equal permanence to abuses. Afraid to destroy it at once, they take a malignant pleasure in seeing it waste by degrees under the pressure of internal malady.

Whatever bears the semblance of *reasoning*, in Bishop Horsley's discourse, will be found, I trust, to have received a satisfactory answer; but to animadvert with a becoming severity on the temper it displays, is a less easy task. To render him the justice he deserves in that respect, would demand all the fierceness of his character.

We owe him an acknowledgment for the frankness with which he avows his decided preference of the clergy of France to dissenters in England;—a sentiment we have often suspected, but have seldom had the satisfaction of seeing openly professed before.

None, he asserts, *at this season, are more entitled to our offices of love, than those with whom the difference is wide in points of doctrine, discipline, and external rites; those venerable exiles, the prelates and clergy of the fallen church of France.* Far be it from me to intercept the compassion of the humane from the unhappy of any nation, tongue, or people: but the extreme tenderness he professes for the fallen church of France is well contrasted by his malignity towards dissenters. Bishop Horsley is a man of sense; and though doctrine, discipline, and external rites, comprehend the whole of christianity, his tender, sympathetic heart is superior to prejudice, and never fails to recognize in a persecutor, a friend and a brother. Admirable consistency in a Protestant Bishop, to lament over the fall of that antichrist whose overthrow is represented by unerring inspiration, as an event the most splendid and happy! It is a shrewd presumption against the utility of religious establishments, that they too often become seats of intolerance, instigators to persecution, nurseries of Bonners and of Horsleys.

His Lordship closes his invective against dissenters, and Dr. Priestley in particular, by presenting a prayer in the spirit of an indictment. We are happy to hear of his Lordship's prayers, and are obliged to him for remembering us in them; but should be more sanguine in our expectation of benefit, if we were not informed, the prayers of the *righteous* only avail much. *Miserable*

men, he tells us, we *are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* With respect to the first, we must have plenty of that article, since he has distilled his own; and if the bonds of iniquity are not added, it is only because they are not within the reach of his mighty malice.

It is time to turn from this disgusting picture of sanctimonious hypocrisy and priestly insolence, to address a word to the reader on the following pamphlet. The political sentiments of Dr. Horsley are in truth of too little consequence in themselves to engage a moment's curiosity, and deserve attention only as they indicate the spirit of the times. The freedom with which I have pointed out the abuses of government, will be little relished by the pusillanimous and the interested, but is, I am certain, of that nature, which it is the duty of the people of England never to relinquish, or suffer to be impaired by any human force or contrivance. In the present crisis of things, the danger to liberty is extreme, and it is requisite to address a warning voice to the nation, that may disturb its slumbers, if it cannot heal its lethargy. When we look at the distraction and misery of a neighbouring country, we behold a scene that is enough to make the most hardy republican tremble at the idea of a revolution. Nothing but an obstinate adherence to abuses can ever push the people of England to that fatal extremity. But if the state of things continues to grow worse and worse, if the friends of reform, the true friends of their country, continue to be overwhelmed by calumny and persecution, the confusion will probably be dreadful, the misery extreme, and the calamities that await us too great for human calculation.

What must be the guilt of those men, who can calmly contemplate the approach of anarchy or despotism, and rather choose to behold the ruin of their country, than resign the smallest pittance of private emolument and advantage! To reconcile the disaffected, to remove discontents, to allay animosities, and open a prospect of increasing happiness and freedom, is yet in our power. But if a contrary course be taken, the sun of Great

Britain is set for ever, her glory departed, and her history added to the catalogue of the mighty empires which exhibit the instability of all human grandeur, of empires which, after they rose by virtue to be the admiration of the world, sunk by corruption into obscurity and contempt. If any thing shall then remain of her boasted constitution, it will display magnificence in disorder, majestic desolation, Babylon in ruins, where, in the midst of broken arches and fallen columns, posterity will trace the *monuments* only of our ancient freedom!

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE NEW EDITION.

As the following pamphlet has been long out of print, the reader will naturally expect some reason should be assigned for its republication. I might satisfy myself with safely affirming that I have no alternative left but either to publish it myself, or permit it to be done by others, since the copyright has long since expired; and I have been under the necessity of claiming as a favour what I could not insist upon as a right.

In addition to this, a most erroneous inference has been drawn from my suffering it to fall into neglect. It has been often insinuated, that my political principles have undergone a revolution, and that I have renounced the opinions which it was the object of this pamphlet to establish. I must beg leave, however, to assert, that fashionable as such changes have been, and sanctioned by many conspicuous examples, I am not ambitious of the honour attached to this species of conversion, from a conviction that he who has once been the advocate of freedom and of reform, will find it much easier to change his conduct than his principles—to worship the golden image, than to believe in the divinity of the idol. A reluctance to appear as a political writer, an opinion, whether well or ill founded, that the christian ministry is in danger of losing something of its energy and sanctity, by embarking on the stormy element of political debate, were the motives that determined me, and which, had I not already engaged, would probably have effectually deterred me from writing upon politics. These scruples have given way to feelings still stronger, to my extreme aversion to be classed with political apostates,

and to the suspicion of being deterred from the honest avowal of my sentiments on subjects of great moment, by hopes and fears to which through every period of my life I have been a total stranger. The effect of increasing years has been to augment if possible, my attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty, and to the cause of reform as inseparably combined with their preservation; and few things would give me more uneasiness than to have it supposed I could ever become hostile or indifferent to these objects.

The alterations in the present edition are nearly all of minor importance; they chiefly consist of slight literary corrections, which very rarely affect the sense. It was not my wish or intention to impair the *identity* of the performance. There is in several parts an acrimony and vehemence in the language, which the candid reader will put to the account of juvenile ardour; and which, should it be deemed excessive, he will perceive could not be corrected, without producing a new composition. One passage in the preface, delineating the character of the late Bishop Horsley, is omitted. On mature reflection, it appeared to the writer not quite consistent either with the spirit of christianity, or with the reverence due to departed genius. For the severity with which he has treated the political character of Mr. Pitt, he is not disposed to apologize, because he feels the fullest conviction that the policy, foreign and domestic, of that celebrated statesman, has inflicted a more incurable wound on the constitution, and entailed more permanent and irreparable calamities on the nation, than that of any other minister in the annals of British history. A simple reflection will be sufficient to evince the unparalleled magnitude of his apostasy, which is, that the memory of the *Son* of Lord Chatham, the vehement opposer of the American War, the champion of Reform, and the idol of the people, has become the rallying point of toryism, the type and symbol of whatever is most illiberal in principle, and intolerant in practice.

1821.

AN APOLOGY.

Section I

On the Right of Public Discussion.

Solon, the celebrated legislator of Athens, we are told, enacted a law for the capital punishment of every citizen who should continue neuter when parties ran high in that republic. He considered, it should seem, the declining to take a decided part on great and critical occasions, an indication of such a culpable indifference to the interests of the commonwealth, as could be expiated only by death. While we blame the rigour of this law, we must confess the principle on which it was founded is just and solid. In a political contest, relating to particular men or measures, a well-wisher to his country may be permitted to remain silent; but when the great interests of a nation are at stake, it becomes every man to act with firmness and vigour. I consider the present as a season of this nature, and shall therefore make no apology for laying before the public the reflections it has suggested.

The most capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy, is the liberty of discussing every subject which can fall within the compass of the human mind; while this remains, freedom will flourish; but should it be lost or impaired, its principles will neither be well understood nor long retained. To render the magistrate a judge of truth, and engage his authority in the suppression of opinions, shows an inattention to the nature and design of political society. When a nation forms a government, it is not wisdom, but *power* which they place in the hand

of the magistrate; from whence it follows, his concern is only with those objects which *power* can operate upon. On this account the administration of justice, the protection of property, and the defence of every member of the community from violence and outrage, fall naturally within the province of the civil ruler, for these may all be accomplished by *power;* but an attempt to distinguish truth from error, and to countenance one set of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner mischievous and absurd. To comprehend the reasons on which the right of public discussion is founded, it is requisite to remark the difference between *sentiment* and *conduct.* The *behaviour* of men in society will be influenced by motives drawn from the prospect of good and evil: here then is the proper department of government, as it is capable of applying that good and evil by which actions are determined. Truth, on the contrary, is quite of a different nature, being supported only by *evidence,* and as, when this is represented, we cannot withhold our assent, so where this is wanting, no power or authority can command it.

However some may affect to dread controversy, it can never be of ultimate disadvantage to the interests of truth, or the happiness of mankind. Where it is indulged in its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will, no doubt, be obtruded upon the public; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are sure to be opposed with at least equal ability, and that superior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colours with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a false system will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and every thing estimated at length according to its true value. Publications, besides, like every thing else that is human, are of a mixed nature, where truth is often blended with falsehood, and important hints suggested in the midst of much impertinent or pernicious matter; nor is there any way of separating the precious from the vile, but by tolerating the whole. Where the right of unlimited inquiry is exerted, the human faculties will be upon the advance; where it

is relinquished they will be of necessity at a stand, and will probably decline.

If we have recourse to experience, that kind of enlarged experience in particular which history furnishes, we shall not be apt to entertain any violent alarm at the greatest liberty of discussion: we shall there see that to this we are indebted for those improvements in arts and sciences, which have meliorated in so great a degree the condition of mankind. The middle ages, as they are called, the darkest period of which we have any particular accounts, were remarkable for two things; the extreme ignorance that prevailed, and an excessive veneration for received opinions; circumstances which, having been always united, operate on each other, it is plain, as cause and effect. The whole compass of science was in those times subject to restraint; every new opinion was looked upon as dangerous. To affirm the globe we inhabit to be round, was deemed heresy, and for asserting its motion, the immortal Galileo was confined in the prisons of the inquisition. Yet, it is remarkable, so little are the human faculties fitted for restraint, that its utmost rigour was never able to effect a thorough unanimity, or to preclude the most alarming discussions and controversies. For no sooner was one point settled than another was started; and as the articles on which men professed to differ were always extremely few and subtle, they came the more easily into contact, and their animosities were the more violent and concentrated. The shape of the tonsure, or manner in which a monk should shave his head, would then throw a whole kingdom into convulsions. In proportion as the world has become more enlightened, this unnatural policy of restraint has retired, the sciences it has entirely abandoned, and has taken its last stand on religion and politics. The first of these was long considered of a nature so peculiarly sacred, that every attempt to alter it, or to impair the reverence for its received institutions, was regarded, under the name of heresy, as a crime of the first magnitude. Yet, dangerous as free inquiry may have been looked upon when extended to the principles

of religion, there is no department where it was more necessary, or its interference more decidedly beneficial. By nobly daring to exert it when all the powers on earth were combined in its suppression, did Luther accomplish that reformation which drew forth primitive christianity, long hidden and concealed under a load of abuses, to the view of an awakened and astonished world. So great is the force of truth when it has once gained the attention, that all the arts and policy of the court of Rome, aided throughout every part of Europe by a veneration for antiquity, the prejudices of the vulgar, and the cruelty of despots, were fairly baffled and confounded by the opposition of a solitary monk. And had this principle of free inquiry been permitted in succeeding times to have full scope, christianity would at this period have been much better understood, and the animosity of sects considerably abated. Religious toleration has never been complete even in England; but having prevailed more here than perhaps in any other country, there is no place where the doctrines of religion have been set in so clear a light, or its truth so ably defended. The writings of deists have contributed much to this end. Whoever will compare the late defences of christianity by Locke, Butler, or Clark, with those of the ancient apologists, will discern in the former far more precision and an abler method of reasoning than in the latter; which must be attributed chiefly to the superior spirit of inquiry by which modern times are distinguished. Whatever alarm then may have been taken at the liberty of discussion, religion, it is plain, hath been a gainer by it; its abuses corrected, and its divine authority settled on a firmer basis than ever.

Though I have taken the liberty of making these preliminary remarks on the influence of free inquiry in general, what I have more immediately in view is, to defend its exercise in relation to government. This being an institution purely human, one would imagine it were the proper province for freedom of discussion in its utmost extent. It is surely just that every one should have a right to examine those measures by

which the happiness of all may be affected. The control of the public mind over the conduct of ministers, exerted through the medium of the press, has been regarded by the best writers, both in our own country and on the continent, as the main support of our liberties. While this remains we cannot be enslaved; when it is impaired or diminished we shall soon cease to be free.

Under pretence of its being seditious to express any disapprobation of the *form* of our government, the most alarming attempts are made to wrest the liberty of the press out of our hands. It is far from being my intention to set up a defence of republican principles, as I am persuaded whatever imperfections may attend the British constitution, it is competent to all the ends of government, and the best adapted of any to the *actual* situation of this kingdom. Yet I am convinced there is no crime in being a republican, and that while he obeys the laws, every man has a right to entertain what sentiments he pleases on our form of government, and to discuss this with the same freedom as any other topic. In proof of this, I shall beg the reader's attention to the following arguments.

1. We may apply to this point in particular, the observation that has been made on the influence of free inquiry in general, that it will issue in the firmer establishment of truth, and the overthrow of error. Every thing that is really excellent will bear examination, it will even invite it, and the more narrowly it is surveyed, to the more advantage it will appear. Is our constitution a good one? it will gain in our esteem by the severest inquiry. Is it bad? then its imperfections should be laid open and exposed. Is it, as is generally confessed, of a mixed nature, excellent in theory, but defective in its practice? freedom of discussion will be still requisite to point out the nature and source of its corruptions, and apply suitable remedies. If our constitution be that perfect model of excellence it is represented, it may boldly appeal to the *reason* of an enlightened age, and need not rest on the support of an implicit faith.

2. Government is the creature of the people, and that which they have created they surely have a right to examine. The great Author of Nature having placed the right of dominion in no particular hands, hath left every point relating to it to be settled by the consent and approbation of mankind. In spite of the attempts of sophistry to conceal the origin of political right, it must inevitably rest at length on the acquiescence of the people. In the case of individuals it is extremely plain. If one man should overwhelm another with superior force, and after completely subduing him, under the name of government, transmit him in this condition to his heirs, every one would exclaim against such an act of injustice. But whether the object of his oppression be one, or a million, can make no difference in its nature, the idea of equity having no relation to that of numbers. Mr. Burke, with some other authors, are aware that an original right of dominion can only be explained by resolving it into the will of the people, yet contend that it becomes inalienable and independent by length of time and prescription. This fatal mistake appears to me to have arisen from confounding the right of dominion with that of private property. Possession for a certain time, it is true, vests in the latter a complete right, or there would be no end to vexatious claims; not to mention that it is of no consequence to society where property lies, provided its regulations be clear, and its possession undisturbed. For the same reason it is of the essence of private property, to be held for the sole use of the owner, with liberty to employ it in what way he pleases, consistent with the safety of the community. But the right of dominion has none of the qualities that distinguish private possession. It is never indifferent to the community in whose hands it is lodged; nor is it intended, in any degree, for the benefit of those who conduct it. Being derived from the will of the people, explicit or implied, and existing solely for their use, it can no more become independent of that will, than water can rise above its source. But if we allow the people are the true origin

of political power, it is absurd to require them to resign the right of discussing any question that can arise either upon its form or its measures, as this would put it for ever out of their power to revoke the trust which they have placed in the hands of their rulers.

3. If it be a crime for a subject of Great Britain to express his disapprobation of that form of government under which he lives, the same conduct must be condemned in the inhabitant of any other country. Perhaps it will be said a distinction ought to be made on account of the superior excellence of the British constitution. This superiority I am not disposed to contest; yet cannot allow it to be a proper reply, as it takes for granted that which is supposed to be a matter of debate and inquiry. Let a government be ever so despotic, it is a chance if those who share in the administration, are not loud in proclaiming its excellence. Go into Turkey, and the Pachas of the provinces will probably tell you, that the Turkish government is the most perfect in the world. If the excellency of a constitution, then, is assigned as the reason that none should be permitted to censure it, who, I ask, is to determine on this its excellence? If you reply, every man's own reason will determine, you concede the very point I am endeavouring to establish, the liberty of free inquiry: if you reply, our rulers, you admit a principle that equally applies to every government in the world, and will lend no more support to the British constitution than to that of Turkey or Algiers.

4. An inquiry respecting the comparative excellence of civil constitutions can be forbidden on no other pretence than that of its tending to sedition and anarchy. This plea, however, will have little weight with those who reflect, to how many ill purposes it has been already applied; and that when the example has been once introduced of suppressing opinions on account of their imagined ill tendency, it has seldom been confined within any safe or reasonable bounds. The doctrine of tendencies is extremely subtle and complicated. What-

ever would diminish our veneration for the christian religion, or shake our belief in the being of a God, will be allowed to be of a very evil tendency; yet few, I imagine, who are acquainted with history, would wish to see the writings of sceptists or deists suppressed by law; being persuaded it would be lodging a very dangerous power in the hands of the magistrate, and that truth is best supported by its own evidence. This dread of certain opinions, on account of their tendency, has been the copious spring of all those religious wars and persecutions which are the disgrace and calamity of modern times.

Whatever danger may result from the freedom of political debate in some countries, no apprehension from that quarter need be entertained in our own. Free inquiry will never endanger the existence of a good government; scarcely will it be able to work the overthrow of a bad one. So uncertain is the issue of all revolutions, so turbulent and bloody the scenes that too often usher them in, the prejudice on the side of an ancient establishment so great, and the interests involved in its support so powerful, that, while it provides in any tolerable measure for the happiness of the people, it may defy all the efforts of its enemies.

The real danger to every free government is less from its enemies than from itself. Should it resist the most temperate reforms, and maintain its abuses with obstinacy, imputing complaint to faction, calumniating its friends, and smiling only on its flatterers; should it encourage informers, and hold out rewards to treachery, turning every man into a spy, and every neighbourhood into the seat of an inquisition, let it not hope it can long conceal its tyranny under the mask of freedom. These are the avenues through which despotism must enter; these are the arts at which integrity sickens, and freedom turns pale.

Section II.

On Associations.

The associations that have been formed in various parts of the kingdom, appear to me to have trodden very nearly in the steps I have been describing. Nothing could have justified this extraordinary mode of combination, but the actual existence of those insurrections and plots, of which no traces have appeared, except in a speech from the throne. They merit a patent for insurrections who have discovered the art of conducting them with so much silence and secrecy, that in the very places where they are affirmed to have happened, they have been heard of only by rebound from the cabinet. Happy had it been for the repose of unoffending multitudes, if the Associators had been able to put their mobs in possession of this important discovery before they set them in motion.

No sooner had the ministry spread an alarm through the kingdom against republicans and levellers, than an assembly of court-sycophants, with a placeman at their head, entered into what they termed an association, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, whence they issued accounts of their proceedings. This was the primitive, the metropolitan association, which, with few exceptions, gave the tone to the succeeding, who did little more than copy its language and its spirit. As the popular ferment has, it may be hoped, by this time in some measure subsided, it may not be improper to endeavour to estimate the utility, and develope the principles of these societies.

1. The first particular that engages the attention, is their *singular* and *unprecedented* nature. The object is altogether new. The political societies that have been hitherto formed, never thought of interfering with the operations of law, but were content with giving, by their union, greater force and publicity to their sentiments. The diffusion of principles was their object, not the suppression; and confiding in the justness of their cause,

they challenged their enemies into the field of controversy. These societies, on the other hand, are combined with an express view to extinguish opinions, and to overwhelm freedom of inquiry by the terrors of criminal prosecution. They pretend not to enlighten the people by the spread of political knowledge, or to confute the errors of the system they wish to discountenance: they breathe only the language of menace: their element is indictment and prosecution, and their criminal justice formed on the model of Rhadamanthus, the poetic judge of Hell.

Castigatque, auditque, dolos subigitque fateri.

2. They are not only new in their nature and complexion, but are unsupported by any just pretence of expedience or necessity. The British constitution hath provided ample securities for its stability and permanence. The prerogatives of the crown, in all matters touching its dignity, are of a nature so high and weighty as may rather occasion alarm than need corroboration. The office of Attorney General is created for the very purpose of prosecuting sedition; and he has the peculiar privilege of filing a bill against offenders, in the King's name, without the intervention of a grand jury. If the public tranquillity be threatened, the King can embody the militia as well as station the military in the suspected places; and when to this is added the immense patronage and influence which flows from the disposal of seventeen millions a year, it must be evident, the stability of the British government can never be shaken by the efforts of any minority whatever. It comprehends within itself all the resources of defence, which the best civil polity ought to possess. The permanence of every government must depend, however, after all, upon opinion, a general persuasion of its excellence, which can never be increased by its assuming a vindictive and sanguinary aspect. While it is the object of the people's approbation it will be continued, and to support it much beyond that period, by mere force and terror, would be impossible were it just, and unjust were it possible. The

law hath amply provided against *overt acts* of sedition and disorder, and to suppress *mere opinions* by any other method than reason and argument, is the height of tyranny. Freedom of thought being intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of man in every stage of his being, is of so much more importance than the preservation of any constitution, that to infringe the former, under pretence of supporting the latter, is to sacrifice the means to the end.

3. In attempting to define the boundary which separates the liberty of the press from its licentiousness, these societies have undertaken a task which they are utterly unable to execute. The line that divides them is too nice and delicate to be perceived by every eye, or to be drawn by every rude and unskilful hand. When a public outrage against the laws is committed, the crime is felt in a moment; but to ascertain the qualities which compose a libel, and to apply with exactness the general idea to every instance and example which may occur, demand an effort of thought and reflection, little likely to be exerted by the great mass of mankind. Bewildered in a pursuit which they are incapable of conducting with propriety, taught to suspect treason and sedition in every page they read, and in every conversation they hear, the necessary effect of such an employment must be to perplex the understanding and degrade the heart. An admirable expedient for transforming a great and generous people into a contemptible race of spies and informers!

For private individuals to combine together at all with a view to quicken the vigour of criminal prosecution is suspicious at least, if not illegal; in a case where the liberty of the press is concerned, all such combinations are utterly improper. The faults and the excellencies of a book are often so blended, the motives of a writer so difficult to ascertain, and the mischiefs of servile restraint so alarming, that the criminality of a book should always be left to be determined by the particular circumstances of the case. As one would rather see many criminals escape, than the punishment of one innocent person, so

it is infinitely better a multitude of errors should be propagated than one truth be suppressed.

If the suppression of Mr. Paine's pamphlet be the object of these societies, they are ridiculous in the extreme; for the circulation of his works ceased the moment they were declared a libel; if any other publication be intended, they are premature and impertinent, in presuming to anticipate the decision of the courts.

4. Admitting, however, the principle on which they are founded to be ever so just and proper, they are highly impolitic. All violence exerted toward opinions which falls short of *extermination*, serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are false may be dissipated by the force of argument: when they are true, their punishment draws towards them infallibly more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more lasting weight and pressure on the mind. The progress of reason is aided, in this case, by the passions, and finds in curiosity, compassion and resentment, powerful auxiliaries.

When public discontents are allowed to vent themselves in reasoning and discourse, they subside into a calm; but their confinement in the bosom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture. The reason of this is obvious: as men are seldom disposed to complain till they at least imagine themselves injured, so there is no injury which they will remember so long, or resent so deeply, as that of being threatened into silence. This seems like adding triumph to oppression, and insult to injury. The apparent tranquillity which may ensue, is delusive and ominous; it is that awful stillness which nature feels, while she is awaiting the discharge of the gathered tempest.

The professed object of these associations is to strengthen the hands of government: but there is one way in which it may strengthen its own hands most effectually; recommended by a very venerable authority, though one from which it hath taken but few lessons. "He that hath *clean hands*," saith a sage adviser, "shall grow stronger and stronger." If the government wishes to become more vigorous, let it first become more pure, lest an addition to its strength should only increase its capacity for mischief.

There is a characteristic feature attending these associations, which is sufficient to acquaint us with their real origin and spirit, that is the silence, almost total, which they maintain respecting political abuses. Had they been intended, as their title imports, merely to furnish an antidote to the spread of republican schemes and doctrines, they would have loudly asserted the necessity of reform, as a conciliatory principle, a centre of union, in which the virtuous of all descriptions might have concurred. But this, however conducive to the good of the people, would have defeated their whole project, which consisted in availing themselves of an alarm which they had artfully prepared, in order to withdraw the public attention from real grievances to imaginary dangers. The Hercules of reform had penetrated the Augean stable of abuses; the fabric of corruption, hitherto deemed sacred, began to totter, and its upholders were apprehensive their iniquity was almost full. In this perplexity they embraced an occasion afforded them by the spread of certain bold speculations—(speculations which owed their success to the corruptions of government) to diffuse a panic, and to drown the justest complaints in unmeaning clamour. The plan of associating, thus commencing in corruption, and propagated by imitation and by fear, had for its *pretext* the fear of republicanism; for its *object* the perpetuity of abuses. Associations in this light may be considered as mirrors placed to advantage for reflecting the finesses and tricks of the ministry. At present they are playing into each other's hands, and no doubt find great entertainment in deceiving the nation. But let them beware lest it should be found, after all, none are so much duped as themselves. Wisdom and truth, the offspring of the sky, are immortal; but cunning and deception, the meteors of the earth, after glittering for a moment, must pass away.

The candour and sincerity of these associators is of a

piece with their other virtues; for while they profess to be combined in order to prevent riots and insurrections, attempted to be raised by republicans and levellers, they can neither point out the persons to whom that description applies, nor mention a single riot that was not fomented by their principles, and engaged on their side. There have been three riots in England of late on a political account; one at Birmingham, one at Manchester, and one at Cambridge; each of which has been levelled against dissenters and friends of reform.*

The Crown and Anchor association, as it was first in order of time, seems also determined, by pushing to a greater length the maxims of arbitrary power, to maintain its pre-eminence in every other respect. The divine right of monarchy, the sacred anointing of kings, passive obedience and non-resistance, are the hemlock and nightshade which these physicians have prescribed for the health of the nation; and are yet but a specimen of a more fertile crop which they have promised out of the hot-bed of depravity. The opinions which they have associated to suppress, are contained, they tell us, in the terms liberty and equality; after which they proceed to a dull harangue on the mischiefs that must flow from equalizing property. All mankind, they gravely tell us, are not equal in virtue, as if that were not sufficiently evident from the existence of their society. The notion of equality in property, was never seriously cherished in the mind of any man, unless for the purpose of calumny: and the *term* transplanted from a neighbouring country, never intended *there* any thing

* The conduct of an honourable member of the House of Commons, respecting the last of these, was extremely illiberal. He informed the house, that the riot at Cambridge was nothing more than that the mob compelled Mr. Musgrave, one of his constituents, who had been heard to speak seditious words, to sing God save the King—a statement in which he was utterly mistaken. Mr. Musgrave, with whom I have the pleasure of being well acquainted, was neither guilty of uttering seditious discourse, nor did he, I am certain, comply with the requisition. His whole crime consists in the love of his country, and a zeal for parliamentary reform. It would be happy for this nation, if a portion only, of the integrity and disinterested virtue which adorn his character, could be infused into our great men.

more than *equality of rights*—as opposed to feudal oppression and hereditary distinctions. An equality of rights may consist with the greatest inequality between the things to which those rights extend. It belongs to the very nature of *property*, for the owner to have a full and complete right to that which he possesses, and consequently for all properties to have *equal* rights; but who is so ridiculous as to infer from thence, that the *possessions* themselves are equal? A more alarming idea cannot be spread among the people, than that there is a large party ready to abet them in any enterprise of depredation and plunder. As all men do not know that the element of the associators is calumny, they are really in danger for a while of being believed, and must thank themselves if they should realize the plan of equality their own malice has invented.

I am happy to find that Mr. Law, a very respectable gentleman, who had joined the Crown and Anchor society, has publicly withdrawn his name, disgusted with their conduct; by whom we are informed they receive anonymous letters, villifying the characters of persons of the first eminence, and that they are in avowed alliance with the ministry for prosecutions, whom they intreat to order the *Solicitor-General to proceed on their suggestions.* When such a society declares *itself to be unconnected with any political party*, our respect for human nature impels us to believe it, and to hope their appearance may be considered as an era in the annals of corruption, which will transmit their names to posterity with the encomiums they deserve. With sycophants so base and venal, no argument or remonstrance can be expected to have any success. It is in vain to apply to reason when it is perverted and abused, to shame when it is extinguished, to a conscience which has ceased to admonish: I shall therefore leave them in the undisturbed possession of that true philosophical indifference which steels them against the reproaches of their own hearts, and the contempt of all honest men.

All the associations, it is true, do not breathe the spirit which disgraces that of the Crown and Anchor.

But they all concur in establishing a political test, on the first appearance of which the friends of liberty should make a stand. The opinions proposed may be innocent, but the precedent is fatal; and the moment subscription becomes the price of security, the Rubicon is passed. Emboldened by the success of this expedient, its authors will venture on more vigorous measures: test will steal upon test, and the bounds of tolerated opinion will be continually narrowed, till we awake under the fangs of a relentless despotism.

Section III.

On a Reform of Parliament.

Whatever difference of opinion may take place in points of less importance, there is one in which the friends of freedom are entirely agreed, that is, the necessity of reform in the representation. The theory of the English constitution presents three independent powers; the King as executive head, with a negative in the legislature; an hereditary House of Peers; and an assembly of Commons, who are appointed to represent the nation at large. From this enumeration it is plain, that the people of England can have no liberty, that is, no share in forming the laws, but what they exert through the medium of the last of those bodies; nor then, but in proportion to its independence of the other. The independence therefore of the House of Commons, is the column on which the whole fabric of our liberty rests. Representation may be considered as complete when it collects to a sufficient extent, and transmits with perfect fidelity the real sentiments of the people; but this it may fail of accomplishing through various causes. If its electors are but a handful of people, and of a peculiar order and description; if its duration is sufficient to enable it to imbibe the spirit of a corporation; if its integrity be corrupted by treasury influence,

or warped by the prospect of places and pensions; it may, by these means, not only fail of the end of its appointment, but fall into such an entire dependence on the executive branch, as to become a most dangerous instrument of arbitrary power. The usurpation of the emperors at Rome would not have been safe, unless it had concealed itself behind the formalities of a senate.

The confused and inadequate state of our representation, at present, is too obvious to escape the attention of the most careless observer. While, through the fluctuation of human affairs, many towns of ancient note have fallen into decay, and the increase of commerce has raised obscure hamlets to splendour and distinction, the state of representation standing still amidst these vast changes, points back to an order of things which no longer subsists. The opulent towns of Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds, send no members to parliament; the decayed boroughs of Cornwall appoint a multitude of representatives. Old Sarum sends two members, though there are not more than one or two families that reside in it. The disproportion between those who vote for representatives and the people at large is so great, that the majority of our House of Commons is chosen by less than eight thousand, in a kingdom consisting of as many millions. Mr. Burgh, in his excellent political disquisitions, has made a very laborious calculation on this head, from which it appears, that the affairs of this great empire are decided by the suffrages of between five and six thousand electors; so that our representation, instead of being co-extended with the people, fails of this in a proportion that is truly enormous. The qualifications, moreover, that confer the right of election, are capricious and irregular. In some places it belongs to the corporation, or to those whom they think proper to make free; in some to every housekeeper; in others it is attached to a particular estate, whose proprietor is absolute lord of the borough, of which he makes his advantage, by representing it himself, or disposing of it to the best bidder. In counties the right of election is annexed only to one kind of property, that of freehold; the proprietor of

copyhold land being entirely deprived of it, though his political situation is precisely the same.*

The consequence of this perplexity in the qualifications of electors is often a tedious scrutiny and examination before a committee of the House of Commons, prolonged to such a length, that there is no time when there are not some boroughs entirely unrepresented. These gross defects in our representation have struck all sensible men very forcibly; even Dr. Paley, a courtly writer in the main, declares, the bulk of the inhabitants of this country have little more concern in the appointment of parliament, than the subjects of the Grand Seignior at Constantinople.

On the propriety of the several plans which have been proposed to remedy these evils, it is not for me to decide; I shall choose rather to point out two general principles which ought, in my opinion, to pervade every plan of parliamentary reform; the first of which respects the mode of election, the second the independence of the elected. In order to give the people a true representation, let its basis be enlarged, and the duration of parliaments shortened. The first of these improvements would diminish bribery and corruption, lessen the violence and tumult of elections, and secure to the people a real and unequivocal organ for the expression of their sentiments.

Were every householder in town and country permitted to vote, the number of electors would be so great, that as no art or industry would be able to bias their minds, so no sums of money would be sufficient to win their suffrages. The plan which the Duke of Richmond recommended was, if I mistake not, still more comprehensive, including all that were of age, except menial servants. By this means, the different passions and prejudices of men would check each other, the predominance of any particular or local interest be kept down, and from the whole there would result that *general impression*, which would convey with precision the unbiassed sense of the people.

* Many of these extraordinary anomalies, so long acknowledged, and their baneful effects so often lamented, are corrected and removed by the "Reform Bill," which, with the King's concurrence, was brought into parliament under the administration of Earl Grey, and received the Royal assent June 7th, 1832.—Ed.

But besides this, another great improvement, in my opinion, would be, to shorten the duration of parliament, by bringing it back to one year. The *Michel Gemote*, or great council of the kingdom, was appointed to meet under Alfred twice a year, and by divers ancient statutes after the Conquest, the king was bound to summon a parliament every year, or oftener, if need be; when, to remedy the looseness of this latter phrase, by the 16th of Charles the Second it was enacted, the holding of parliaments should not be intermitted above three years at most; and in the first of King William, it is declared as one of the rights of the people, that for redress of all grievances, and preserving the laws, parliaments ought to be held frequently; which was again reduced to a certainty by another statute, which enacts, that a new parliament shall be called within three years after the termination of the former. To this term did they continue limited till the reign of George the First; when, after the rebellion of 1715, the septennial act was passed, under the pretence of diminishing the expense of elections, and preserving the kingdom against the designs of the Pretender. A noble Lord* observed, on that occasion, he was at an utter loss to describe the nature of this prolonged parliament, unless he were allowed to borrow a phrase from the Athanasian Creed; for it was "neither created, nor begotten, but proceeding." Without disputing the upright intentions of the authors of this act, it is plain, they might on the same principle have voted themselves perpetual, and their conduct will ever remain a monument of that short-sightedness in politics, which, in providing for the pressure of the moment, puts to hazard the liberty and happiness of future times. It is intolerable, that in so large a space of a man's life as seven years, he should never be able to

* The Earl of Peterborough.

correct the error he may have committed in the choice of a representative, but be compelled to see him every year dipping deeper into corruption; a helpless spectator of the contempt of his interests, and the ruin of his country. During the present period of parliaments a nation may sustain the greatest possible changes; may descend by a succession of ill counsels, from the highest pinnacle of its fortunes to the lowest point of depression; its treasure exhausted, its credit sunk, and its weight almost completely annihilated in the scale of empire. Ruin and felicity are seldom dispensed by the same hand, nor is it likely any succour in calamity should flow from the wisdom and virtue of those, by whose folly and wickedness it was inflicted.

The union between a representative and his constituents ought to be strict and entire; but the septennial act has rendered it little more than nominal. The duration of parliament sets its members at a distance from the people, begets a notion of independence, and gives the minister so much leisure to insinuate himself into their graces, that before the period is expired, they become very mild and complying. Sir Robert Walpole used to say, that "every man had his price;" a maxim on which he relied with so much security, that he declared he seldom troubled himself with the election of members, but rather chose to stay and buy them up when they came to market. A very interesting work, lately published, entitled, "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," unfolds some parts of this mystery of iniquity, which the reader will probably think equally new and surprising. There is a regular office, it seems, that of manager of the House of Commons, which generally devolves on one of the secretaries of state, and consists in securing, at all events, a majority in parliament by a judicious application of promises and bribes. The sums disbursed by this honourable office are involved under the head of Secret Service Money; and so delicate is this employment of manager of the House of Commons considered, that we have an account in the above-mentioned treatise, of a new arrangement of ministry, which failed for no other

reason than that the different parties could not agree on the proper person to fill it.*

This secret influence which prevails, must be allowed to be extremely disgraceful; nor can it ever be effectually remedied, but by contracting the duration of parliaments.

If it be objected to annual parliaments, that by this means the tumult and riot attendant on elections will be oftener repeated; it ought to be remembered, that their duration is the chief source of these disorders. Render a seat in the House of Commons of less value, and you diminish at once the violence of the struggle. In America, the election of representatives takes place throughout that vast continent, in one day, with the greatest tranquillity.

In a mixed constitution like ours, it is impossible to estimate the importance of an independent parliament; for as it is here our freedom consists, if this barrier to the encroachments of arbitrary power once fails, we can oppose no other. Should the king attempt to govern without a parliament, or should the upper house pretend to legislate independently of the lower, we should immediately take the alarm; but, if the House of Commons falls insensibly under the control of the other two branches of the legislature, our danger is greater, because our apprehensions are less. The forms of a free constitution surviving, when its spirit is extinct, would perpetuate slavery by rendering it more concealed and secure. On this account, I apprehend, did Montesquieu predict

* As I have taken my information on this head entirely on the authority of the work called "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," the reader may not be displeased with the following extract, from vol. ii. page 121. "The management of the House of Commons, as it is called, is a confidential department unknown to the constitution. In the public accounts it is immersed under the head of secret service money. It is usually given to the secretary of state when that post is filled by a commoner. The business of the department, is to distribute with *art* and *policy* amongst the members who have no ostensible places, sums of money, for their support during the session; besides contracts, lottery tickets, and other douceurs. It is no uncommon circumstance, at the end of a session, for a gentleman to receive five hundred or a thousand pounds for *his services*."

the loss of our freedom, from the legislative power becoming more corrupt than the executive; a crisis to which, if it has not arrived already, it is hastening apace. The immortal Locke, far from looking with the indifference too common on the abuses in our representation, considered all improper influence exerted in that quarter as threatening the very dissolution of government. *Thus*, says he, *to regulate candidates and electors, and new model the ways of election, what is it but to cut up the government by the roots, and poison the very fountain of public security?*

No enormity can subsist long without meeting with advocates; on which account we need not wonder, that the corruption of parliament has been justified under the mild denomination of influence, though it must pain every virtuous mind to see the enlightened Paley engaged in its defence. If a member votes consistently with his convictions, his conduct, in that instance, has not been determined by influence; but if he votes otherwise, give it what gentle name you please, he forfeits his integrity; nor is it possible to mark the boundaries which should limit his compliance; for if he may deviate a little, to attain the See of Winchester, he may certainly step a little farther, to reach the dignity of a Primate. How familiar must the practice of corruption have become, when a philosophical moralist, a minister of religion, of great talents and virtue, in the calm retirement of his study, does not hesitate to become its public apologist?

The necessity of a reform in the constitution of parliament, is in nothing more obvious than in the ascendancy of the aristocracy. This colossus bestrides both houses of parliament; legislates in one, and exerts a domineering influence over the other. It is humiliating. at the approach of an election, to see a whole county send a deputation to an Earl or Duke, and beg a representative as you would beg an alms. A multitude of laws have been framed, it is true, to prevent all interference of peers in elections; but they neither are nor can be effectual, while the House of Commons opens its

doors to their sons and brothers. If our liberty depends on the balance and control of the respective orders in the state, it must be extremely absurd to blend them together, by placing the father in one department of the legislature, and his family in the other.

Freedom is supposed, by some, to derive great security from the existence of a regular opposition; an expedient which is, in my opinion, both the offspring and the cherisher of faction. That a minister should be opposed, when his measures are destructive to his country, can admit of no doubt; that a systematic opposition should be maintained against any man, merely as a minister, without regard to the principles he may profess, or the measures he may propose, which is intended by a regular opposition, appears to me a most corrupt and unprincipled maxim. When a legislative assembly is thus thrown into parties, distinguished by no leading principle, however warm and animated their debates, it is plain they display only a struggle for the emoluments of office. This the people discern, and in consequence, listen with very little attention to the representations of the minister on the one hand, or the minority on the other; being persuaded the only real difference between them is, that the one is anxious to gain what the other is anxious to keep. If a measure be good, it is of no importance to the nation from whom it proceeds; yet will it be esteemed by the opposition a point of honour not to let it pass, without throwing every obstruction in its way. If we listen to the minister for the time being, the nation is always flourishing and happy; if we hearken to the opposition, it is a chance if it be not on the brink of destruction. In an assembly convened to deliberate on the affairs of a nation, how disgusting to hear the members perpetually talk of their connexions, and their resolution to act with a particular set of men, when, if they have happened by chance to vote according to their convictions rather than their party, half their speeches are made up of apologies for a conduct so new and unexpected! When they see men united who agree in nothing but their hostility to the minister, the people fall

at first into amazement and irresolution; till perceiving political debate is a mere scramble for profit and power, they endeavour to become as corrupt as their betters. It is not in that roar of faction which deafens the ear and sickens the heart, the still voice of Liberty is heard. She turns from the disgusting scene, and regards these struggles as the pangs and convulsions in which she is doomed to expire.

The æra of parties, flowing from the animation of freedom, is ever followed by an æra of faction, which marks its feebleness and decay. Parties are founded on *principle*, factions on *men;* under the first, the people are contending respecting the system that shall be pursued; under the second, they are candidates for servitude, and are only debating *whose livery* they shall wear. The purest times of the Roman republic were distinguished by violent dissensions; but they consisted in the jealousy of the several *orders* of the state among each other; on the ascendance of the patricians on the one side, and the plebeians on the other; a useful struggle, which maintained the balance and equipoise of the constitution. In the progress of corruption things took a turn; the permanent parties which sprang from the fixed principles of government were lost, and the citizens arranged themselves under the standard of particular leaders, being bandied into factions, under Marius or Sylla, Cæsar or Pompey; while the republic stood by without any interest in the dispute, a passive and helpless victim. The crisis of the fall of freedom, in different nations, with respect to the causes that produce it, is extremely uniform. After the manner of the ancient factions, we hear much in England of the Bedford party; the Rockingham party; the Portland party; when it would puzzle the wisest man to point out their political distinction. The useful jealousy of the separate orders is extinct, being all melted down and blended into one mass of corruption. The House of Commons looks with no jealousy on the House of Lords, nor the House of Lords on the House of Commons; the struggle in both is maintained by the ambition of powerful individuals

and families, between whom the kingdom is thrown as the prize, and the moment they unite, they perpetuate its subjection and divide its spoils.

From a late instance, we see they quarrel only about the partition of the prey, but are unanimous in defending it. To the honour of Mr. Fox, and the band of illustrious patriots of which he is the leader, it will however be remembered, that they stood firm against a host of opponents, when, assailed by every species of calumny and invective, they had nothing to expect but the reproaches of the present, and the admiration of all future times. If any thing can rekindle the sparks of Freedom, it will be the flame of their eloquence; if any thing can reanimate her faded form, it will be the vigour of such minds.

The disordered state of our representation, it is acknowledged on all hands, must be remedied, some time or other; but it is contended, that it would be improper at present, on account of the political ferment that occupies the minds of men, and the progress of republican principles; a plausible objection, if delay can restore public tranquillity; but unless I am greatly mistaken, it will have just a contrary effect. It is hard to conceive, how the discontent that flows from the abuses of government can be allayed by their being perpetuated. If they are of such a nature that they can neither be palliated or denied, and are made the ground of invective against the whole of our constitution, are not they its best friends who wish to cut off this occasion of scandal and complaint? The *theory* of our constitution, we say, and justly, has been the admiration of the world; the cavils of its enemies, then, derive their force entirely from the disagreement between that theory and its practice; nothing therefore remains, but to bring them as near as human affairs will admit to a perfect correspondence. This will cut up faction by the roots, and immediately distinguish those who wish to reform the constitution, from those who wish its subversion. Since the abuses are real, the longer they are continued the more they will be known; the discontented will

be always gaining ground, and, though repulsed, will return to the charge with redoubled vigour and advantage. Let reform be considered as a chirurgical operation, if you please; but since the constitution must undergo it or die, it is best to submit before the remedy becomes as dangerous as the disease. The example drawn from a neighbouring kingdom, as an argument for delay, ought to teach us a contrary lesson. Had the encroachments of arbitrary power been steadily resisted, and remedies been applied as evils appeared, instead of piling them up as precedents, the disorders of government could never have arisen to that enormous height, nor would the people have been impelled to the dire necessity of building the whole fabric of political society afresh. It seems an infatuation in governments, that in tranquil times they treat the people with contempt, and turn a deaf ear to their complaints; till, public resentment kindling, they find, when it is too late, that, in their eagerness to retain every thing, they have lost all.

The pretences of Mr. Pitt and his friends for delaying this great business are so utterly inconsistent, that it is too plain they are averse in reality to its ever taking place. When Mr. Pitt is reminded that he himself, at the beginning of his ministry, recommended parliamentary reform, he replies, it was necessary then, on account of the calamitous state of the nation, just emerged from an unsuccessful war, and filled with gloom and disquiet. But, unless the people are libelled, they now are still more discontented; with this difference, that their uneasiness formerly arose from events but remotely connected with unequal representation; but that this is now the chief ground of complaint. It is absurd, however, to rest the propriety of reform on any turn of public affairs. If it be not requisite to secure our freedom, it is vain and useless; but if it be a proper means of preserving that blessing, the nation will need it as much in peace as in war. When we wish to retain those habits which we know it were best to relinquish, we are extremely ready to be soothed with momentary pretences for delay, though they appear, on reflection, to be drawn

from quite opposite topics, and therefore to be equally applicable to all times and seasons.

A similar delusion is practised in the conduct of public affairs. If the people be tranquil and composed, and have not caught the passion of reform, it is impolitic, say the ministry, to disturb their minds, by agitating a question that lies at rest: if they are awakened, and touched with a conviction of the abuse, we must wait, say they, till the ferment subsides, and not lessen our dignity by seeming to yield to popular clamour: if we are at peace, and commerce flourishes, it is concluded we cannot need any improvement, in circumstances so prosperous and happy: if, on the other hand, we are at war, and our affairs unfortunate, an amendment in the representation is dreaded, as it would seem an acknowledgment that our calamities flowed from the ill conduct of parliament. Now, as the nation must always be in one or other of these situations, the conclusion is, the period of reform can never arrive at all.

This pretence for delay will appear the more extraordinary in the British ministry, from a comparison of the exploits they have performed with the task they decline. They have found time for involving us in millions of debt; for cementing a system of corruption that reaches from the cabinet to the cottage; for carrying havoc and devastation to the remotest extremities of the globe; for accumulating taxes which famish the peasant and reward the parasite; for bandying the whole kingdom into factions, to the ruin of all virtue and public spirit; for the completion of these achievements they have suffered no opportunity to escape them. Elementary treatises on time mention various arrangements and divisions, but none have ever touched on the chronology of statesmen. These are a generation who measure their time not so much by the revolutions of the sun, as by the revolutions of power. There are two æras particularly marked in their calendar; the one the period they are in the ministry, and the other when they are out; which have a very different effect on their sentiments and reasoning. Their course commences in the character of friends to

the people, whose grievances they display in all the colours of variegated diction. But, the moment they step over the threshold of St. James's, they behold every thing in a new light; the taxes seem lessened, the people rise from their depression, the nation flourishes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of paradise, or mending the air of elysium.

Section IV.

On Theories, and the Rights of Man.

Among the many alarming symptoms of the present time, it is not the least, that there is a prevailing disposition to hold in contempt the *Theory* of liberty as false and visionary. For my own part, it is my determination never to be deterred by an obnoxious name from an open avowal of any principles that appear useful and important. Were the ridicule now cast on the Rights of Man confined to a mere phrase, as the title of a book, it were of little consequence; but when *that* is made the pretence for deriding the doctrine itself, it is a matter of serious alarm.

To place the rights of man as the basis of lawful government, is not peculiar to Mr. Paine; but was done more than a century ago by men of no less eminence than Sidney and Locke. It is therefore extremely disingenuous to impute the system to Mr. Paine as its author. His structure may be false and erroneous, but the foundation was laid by other hands. That there are *natural rights*, or in other words, a certain liberty which men may exercise, independent of permission from society, can scarcely be doubted by those who comprehend the meaning of the terms. Every man must have a natural right to use his limbs in what manner he pleases, that is not injurious to another. In like manner he must have a right to worship God after the mode he thinks acceptable; or in other words, he ought not to be

compelled to consult any thing but his own conscience. These are a specimen of those rights which may properly be termed *natural;* for, as philosophers speak of the primary qualities of matter, they cannot be increased or diminished. We cannot conceive the right of using our limbs to be created by society, or to be rendered more complete by any human agreement or compact.

But, there still remains a question, whether this natural liberty must not be considered as entirely relinquished, when we become members of society. It is pretended, that the moment we quit a state of *nature*, as we have given up the control of our actions, in return for the superior advantages of law and government; we can never appeal again to any original principles, but must rest content with the advantages that are secured by the terms of the society. These are the views which distinguish the political writings of Mr. Burke, an author whose splendid and unequalled powers have given a vogue and fashion to certain tenets, which from any other pen would have appeared abject and contemptible. In the field of reason the encounter would not be difficult, but who can withstand the fascination and magic of his eloquence? The excursions of his genius are immense. His imperial fancy has laid all nature under tribute, and has collected riches from every scene of the creation and every walk of art. His eulogium on the Queen of France is a masterpiece of pathetic composition; so select are its images, so fraught with tenderness, and so rich with colours "dipt in heaven," that he who can read it without rapture may have merit as a reasoner, but must resign all pretensions to taste and sensibility. His imagination is, in truth, only too prolific: a world of itself, where he dwells in the midst of chimerical alarms, is the dupe of his own enchantments, and starts, like Prospero, at the spectres of his own creation.

His intellectual views in general, however, are wide and variegated, rather than distinct; and the light he has let in on the British constitution in particular, resembles the coloured effulgence of a painted medium, a kind

of mimic twilight, solemn and soothing to the senses, but better fitted for ornament than use.

A book has lately been published, under the title of "Happiness and Rights," written by Mr. Hey, a respectable member of the University of Cambridge, whose professed object is, with Mr. Burke, to overturn the doctrine of natural rights. The few remarks I may make upon it are less on account of any merit in the work itself, than on account of its author, who, being a member of considerable standing in the most liberal of our universities, may be presumed to speak the sentiments of that learned body. The chief difference between his theory and Mr. Burke's, seems to be the denial of the existence of any rights that can be denominated natural, which Mr. Burke only supposes *resigned* on the formation of political society. *The rights*, says Mr. Hey, *I can conjecture (for it is but a conjecture) to belong to me as a mere man, are so uncertain, and comparatively so unimportant, while the rights I feel myself possessed of in civil society are so great, so numerous, and many of them so well defined, that I am strongly inclined to consider society as creating or giving my rights, rather than recognizing and securing what I could have claimed if I had lived in an unconnected state.* (p. 137.)

As government implies restraint, it is plain a portion of our freedom is given up by entering into it; the only question can then be, how far this resignation extends, whether to a part, or to the whole? This point may, perhaps, be determined by the following reflections:—

1. The advantages that civil power can procure to a community, are *partial*. A small part, in comparison of the condition of man, can fall within its influence. Allowing it to be a rational institution, it must have that end in view which a reasonable man would propose by appointing it; nor can it imply any greater sacrifice than is strictly necessary to its attainment. But on what account is it requisite to unite in political society? Plainly to guard against the injury of others; for, were there no injustice among mankind, no protection would be needed; no *public force* necessary; every man might be left without restraint or control. The attainment of all possible good, then, is *not* the purpose of laws, but to secure us from external injury and violence; and as the means must be proportioned to the end, it is absurd to suppose that, by submitting to civil power, with a view to some *particular* benefits, we should be understood to hold all our advantages dependent upon that authority. Civil restraints imply nothing more than a surrender of our liberty in some points, in order to maintain it undisturbed in others of more importance. Thus we give up the liberty by repelling force by force, in return for a more equal administration of justice than private resentment would permit. But there are some rights which cannot with any propriety be yielded up to human authority, because they are perfectly consistent with every benefit its appointment can procure. The free use of our faculties in distinguishing truth from falsehood, the exertion of corporeal powers without injury to others, the choice of a religion and worship, are branches of natural freedom which no government can justly alter or diminish, because their restrain cannot conduce to that security which is its proper object. Government, like every other contrivance, has a *specific* end; it implies the resignation of just as much liberty as is needful to attain it; whatever is demanded more is superfluous, a species of tyranny which ought to be corrected by withdrawing it. The relation of master and servant, of pupil and instructor, of the respective members of a family to their head, all include some restraint, some abridgment of natural liberty. But in these cases, it is not pretended that the surrender is total; and why should this be supposed to take place in political society, which is *one* of the relations of human life? this would be to render the foundation infinitely broader than the superstructure.

2. From the notion that political society precludes an appeal to natural rights, the greatest absurdities must ensue. If that idea be just, it is improper to say of any administration, that it is despotic or oppressive, unless it has receded from its first form and model. Civil power can never exceed its limits, until it deviates into a new

track. For, if every portion of natural freedom be given up by yielding to civil authority, we can never claim any other liberties than those precise ones which were ascertained in its first formation. The vassals of despotism may complain, perhaps, of the hardships which they suffer, but, unless it appear they are of *a new kind*, no injury is done them, for no right is violated. Rights are either natural or artificial; the first cannot be pleaded after they are relinquished, and the second cannot be impaired but by a departure from ancient precedents. If a man should be unfortunate enough to live under the dominion of a prince, who, like the monarchs of Persia, could murder his subjects at will, he may be unhappy, but cannot complain; for, on Mr. Hey's theory, he never had any rights but what were created by society, and on Mr. Burke's he has for ever relinquished them. The claims of *nature* being set aside, and the constitution of the government despotic from the beginning, his misery involves no injustice, and admits of no remedy. It requires little discernment to see that this theory rivets the chains of despotism, and shuts out from the political world the smallest glimpse of emancipation or improvement. Its language is, he that is a slave, let him be a slave still.

3. It is incumbent on Mr. Burke and his followers to ascertain the *time* when natural rights are relinquished. Mr. Hey is content with tracing their existence to society, while Mr. Burke, the more moderate of the two, admitting their foundation in nature, only contends that regular government absorbs and swallows them up, bestowing artificial advantages in exchange. But, at what period, it may be inquired, shall we date this wonderful revolution in the social condition of man? If we say it was as early as the first dawn of society, natural liberty had never any existence at all, since there are no traces, even in tradition, of a period when men were utterly unconnected with each other. If we say this complete surrender took place with the first rudiments of law and government in every particular community, on what principle were subsequent improvements introduced?

Mr. Burke is fond of resting our liberties on Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights; but he ought to remember, that, as they do not carry us to the commencement of our government, which was established ages before, our forefathers had long ago resigned their natural liberty. If those famous stipulations only recognised such privileges as were in force before, they have no claim to be considered as the foundations of our constitution; but, it they formed an *æra* in the annals of freedom, they must have been erected on the basis of those natural rights which Mr. Burke ridicules and explodes. When our ancestors made those demands, it is evident they did not suppose an appeal to the rights of nature precluded. Every step a civilized nation can take towards a more equal administration, is either an assertion of its natural liberty, or a criminal encroachment on just authority. The influence of government on the stock of natural rights may be compared to that of a manufactory on the rude produce; it adds nothing to its quantity, but only qualifies and fits it for use. Political arrangement is more or less perfect in proportion as it enables us to exert our natural liberty to the greatest advantage; if it is diverted to any other purpose, it is made the instrument of gratifying the passions of a few, or imposes greater restraint than its object prescribes; it degenerates into tyranny and oppression.

The greatest objection to these principles is their perspicuity, which makes them ill relished by those whose interest it is to hide the nature of government from vulgar eyes, and induce a persuasion, that it is a secret which can only be unfolded to the *initiated* under the conduct of Mr. Burke, the great *Hierophant* and revealer of the mysteries. A mystery and a trick are generally two sides of the same object, according as it is turned to the view of the beholder.

The doctrine of Mr. Locke, and his followers, is founded on the natural equality of mankind; for as no man can have any natural or inherent right to rule any more than another, it necessarily follows, that a claim to dominion, wherever it is lodged, must be ultimately referred

back to the explicit or implied consent of the people. Whatever source of civil authority is assigned different from this, will be found to resolve itself into *mere force.* But as the natural equality of one generation is the same with that of another, the people have always the same right to new model their government, and set aside their rulers. This right, like every other, may be exerted capriciously and absurdly; but no human power can have any pretensions to intercept its exercise. For civil rulers cannot be considered as having any claims that are co-extended with those of the people, nor as forming a party separate from the nation. They are appointed by the community to *execute* its will, not to *oppose* it; to manage the *public*, not to pursue any *private* or *particular* interests. Are all the existing authorities in a state to lie then, it may be said, at the mercy of the populace, liable to be dissipated by the first breath of public discontent? By no means; they are to be respected and obeyed, as interpreters of the public will. Till they are set aside by the unequivocal voice of the people, they are a law to every member of the community. To resist them is rebellion; and for any particular set of men to attempt their subversion by force, is a heinous crime, as they represent and embody the collective majesty of the state. They are the exponents, to use the language of algebra, of the precise quantity of liberty the people have thought fit to legalize and secure. But though they are a law to every member of the society, separately considered, they cannot bind the society itself, or prevent it, when it shall think proper, from forming an entire new arrangement; a right that no compact can alienate or diminish, and which has been exerted as often as a free government has been formed. On this account, in resolving the right of dominion into compact, Mr. Locke appears to me somewhat inconsistent, or he has expressed himself with less clearness and accuracy than was usual with that great philosopher. There must have been a previous right to insist on stipulations in those who formed them: nor is there any reason why

one race of men is not as competent to that purpose as another.

With the enemies of freedom, it is a usual artifice to represent the sovereignty of the people as a licence to anarchy and disorder. But the tracing up civil power to that source will not diminish our obligation to obey; it only explains its reasons, and settles it on clear determinate principles. It turns blind submission into rational obedience, tempers the passion for liberty with the love of order, and places mankind in a happy medium, between the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and oppression on the other. It is the polar star that will conduct us safe over the ocean of political debate and speculation, the law of laws, the legislator of legislators.

To reply to all the objections that have been advanced against this doctrine would be a useless task, and exhaust the patience of the reader; but there is one drawn from the idea of a majority, much insisted on by Mr. Burke, and Mr. Hey, of which the latter gentleman is so enamoured, that he has spread it out into a multitude of pages. They assert, that the theory of natural rights can never be realised, because every member of the community cannot concur in the choice of a government, and the minority being compelled to yield to the decisions of the majority, are under tyrannical restraint. To this reasoning it is a sufficient answer, that, if a number of men act together at all, the necessity of being determined by the sense of the majority, in the last resort, is so obvious, that it is always implied. An exact concurrence of many particular wills is impossible; and therefore, when each taken separately has precisely the same influence, there can be no hardship in suffering the result to remain at issue, till it is determined by the coincidence of the greater number. The idea of *natural liberty*, at least, is so little violated by this method of proceeding, that it is no more than what takes place every day in the smallest society, where the necessity of being determined by the voice of the majority is so plain, that it is scarcely ever reflected

upon. The defenders of the rights of man mean not to contend for impossibilities. We never hear of a right to fly, or to make two and two five. If the majority of a nation approve its government, it is, in this respect, as free as the smallest association or club; any thing beyond which must be visionary and romantic.

The next objection Mr. Hey insists upon, is, if possible, still more frivolous, turning on the case of young persons during minority. He contends, that as some of these have more sense than may be found among common mechanics, and the lowest of the people, *natural right* demands their inclinations to be consulted in political arrangements. Were there any method of ascertaining exactly the degree of understanding possessed by young persons during their minority, so as to distinguish early intellects from the less mature, there would be some force in the objection; in the present case, the whole supposition is no more than one of those chimeras which this gentleman is ever fond of combating, with the same gravity, and to as little purpose, as Don Quixote his windmill.

The period of minority, it is true, varies in different countries, and is, perhaps, best determined every where by ancient custom and habit. An early maturity may confer on sixteen more sagacity than is sometimes found at sixty; but what then? A wise government, having for its object human nature at large, will be adapted, not to its accidental deviations, but to its usual aspects and appearances. For an answer to his argument against natural rights, drawn from the exclusion of women from political power, I beg leave to refer the author to the ingenious Miss Wolstencroft, the eloquent patroness of female claims; unless, perhaps, every other empire may appear mean in the estimation of those, who possess, with an uncontrolled authority, the empire of the heart.

"The situation," says Mr. Hey (p. 137) "in which any man finds himself placed, when he arrives at the power of reflecting, appears to be the consequence of a vast train of events, extending backwards, hundreds

or thousands of years, for aught he can tell, and totally baffling all the attempts at comprehension by human faculties."

From hence he concludes, "all inquiry into the rights of man should be forborne. What rights this Being (God) may have possibly intended that I might claim from beings like myself, if he had thought proper that I had lived amongst them in an *unconnected* state, that is to say, what are the rights of a mere *man*, appears a question involved in such obscurity, that I cannot trace even any indication of that Being having intended me to inquire into it."

If any thing be intended by these observations, it is, that we ought never to attempt to ameliorate our condition, till we are perfectly acquainted with its causes. But as the subjects of the worst government are, probably, as ignorant of the train of events for some thousands of years back, as those who enjoy the best, they are to rest contented, it seems, until they can clear up that obscurity, and inquire no farther.

It would seem strange to presume an inference good, from not knowing how we arrived at it. Yet this seems as reasonable as to suppose the political circumstances of a people fit and proper, on account of our inability to trace the causes that produced them. To know the source of an evil, is only of consequence, as it may chance to conduct us to the remedy. But the whole paragraph I have quoted betrays the utmost perplexity of thought; confounding the *civil condition* of individuals with the political institution of a society. The former will be infinitely various in the same community, arising from the different character, temper, and success of its members: the latter unites and pervades the whole, nor can any abuses attach to it but what may be displayed and remedied.

It is perfectly disingenuous in this author to represent his adversaries as desirous of committing the business of legislation indiscriminately to the meanest of mankind.*

* "A man whose hands and ideas have been usefully confined for thirty or forty years to the labour and management of a farm, or the

He well knows the wildest democratical writer contends for nothing more than popular government by *representation*. If the labouring part of the people are not competent to *choose* legislators, the English constitution is essentially wrong; especially in its present state, where the importance of each vote is enhanced by the paucity of the electors.

After the many examples of misrepresentation which this author has furnished, his declamations on the levelling system cannot be matter of surprise. An equality of rights is perfectly consistent with the utmost disproportion between the objects to which they extend. A peasant may have the same right to the exertion of his faculties with a Newton; but this will not fill up the vast chasm that separates them.

The ministry will feel great obligations to Mr. Hey, for putting off the evil day of reform to a far distant period,—a period so remote, that they may hope, before it is completed, their names and their actions will be buried in friendly oblivion. He indulges a faint expectation, he tells us, that the practice of governments may be improved *in two or three thousand years*.

A smaller edition of this work has lately been published, considerably abridged, for the use of the poor, who, it may be feared, will be very little benefited by its perusal. Genius may dazzle, eloquence may persuade, reason may convince; but to render popular, cold and comfortless sophistry, unaided by those powers, is a hopeless attempt.

I have trespassed, I am afraid, too far on the patience of my readers, in attempting to expose the fallacies by which the followers of Mr. Burke perplex the understanding, and endeavour to hide in obscurity the true

construction of a wall, or piece of cloth, does indeed, in one respect, appear superior to an infant three months old. The man could make a law of some sort or other; the infant could not. The man could, in any particular circumstances of a nation, say those words, We will go to war, or we will not go to war, the infant could not. But the difference between them is more in appearance than in any useful reality. The man is totally unqualified to judge what ought to be enacted for laws." Hey, p. 31.

sources of political power. Were there indeed any impropriety in laying them open, the blame would not fall on the friends of freedom, but on the provocation afforded by the extravagance and absurdity of its enemies. If princely power had never been raised to a level with the attributes of the divinity by Filmer, it had probably never been sunk as low as popular acquiescence by Locke. The confused mixture of liberty and oppression which ran through the feudal system, prevented the theory of government from being closely inspected: particular rights were secured; but the relation of the people to their rulers was never explained on its just principles, till the transfer of superstition to civil power shocked the common sense of mankind, and awakened their inquiries. They drew aside the veil, and where they were taught to expect a mystery, they discerned a fraud. There is, however, no room to apprehend any evil from political investigation, that will not be greatly overbalanced by its advantages. For, besides that truth is always beneficial, tame submission to usurped power has hitherto been the malady of human nature. The dispersed situation of mankind, their indolence and inattention, and the opposition of their passions and interests, are circumstances which render it extremely difficult for them to combine in resisting tyranny with success. In the field of government, as in that of the world, *the tares of despotism were sown while men slept!* The necessity of regular government, under some form or other, is so pressing, that the evil of anarchy is of short duration. Rapid, violent, destructive in its course, it is an inundation which, fed by no constant spring, soon dries up and disappears. The misfortune on these occasions is, that the people, for want of understanding the principles of liberty, seldom reach the true source of their misery; but, after committing a thousand barbarities, only change their masters, when they should change their system.

Section V.

On Dissenters.

Of that foul torrent of insult and abuse, which it has lately been the lot of the friends of liberty to sustain, a larger portion hath fallen to the share of dissenters than any other description of men. Their sentiments have been misrepresented, their loyalty suspected, and their most illustrious characters held up to derision and contempt. The ashes of the dead have been as little spared as the merit of the living; and the same breath that has attempted to depreciate the talents and virtues of a Priestley, is employed to blacken the memory of a Price. The effusions of a distempered loyalty are mingled with execrations on that unfortunate sect; as if the attachment to the king were to be measured by the hatred to dissenters. Without any shadow of criminality, they are doomed to sustain perpetual insult and reproach; their repose disturbed, and their lives threatened and endangered. If dissent be, in truth, a crime of such magnitude that it must not be tolerated, let there be at least a punishment prescribed by law, that they may know what they have to expect, and not lie at the mercy of an enraged and deluded populace. It is natural to inquire into the cause of this extreme virulence against a particular class of the community, who are distinguished from others only by embracing a different form and system of worship.

In the practice of the moral virtues, it will hardly be denied, that they are at least as exemplary as their neighbours; while, in the more immediate duties of religion, if there be any distinction, it lies in their carrying to a greater height, sentiments of seriousness and devotion. The nature of their *public conduct* will best appear from a rapid survey of some of those great political events in which it has had room to display itself; where, though our history has been ransacked to supply

invective, it will be seen, their merits more than compensate for any errors they may have committed. Their zeal in opposing Charles I. has been an eternal theme of reproach; but it should be remembered, that when that resistance first took place, the parliament consisted for the most part of churchmen, and was fully justified in its opposition, by the arbitrary measures of the court. Had the pretensions of Charles been patiently acquiesced in, our government had long ago been despotic.

What medium might have been found between tame submission and open hostility, and whether matters were not afterwards pushed to an extremity against the unfortunate monarch, it is not for me to determine, nor does it concern the vindication of dissenters. For long before the final catastrophe which issued in the king's death, the favourable intentions of parliament were overruled by the ascendancy of Cromwell; the parliament itself oppressed by his arms, and the influence both of churchmen and dissenters bent under military usurpation. The execution of Charles was the deed of a faction, condemned by the great body of the puritans as a criminal severity. But whatever blame they may be supposed to have incurred on account of their conduct to Charles, the merit of restoring monarchy in his son was all their own. The entire force of the empire was in their hands; Monk himself of their party; the parliament, the army, all puritans; yet were they disinterested enough to call the heir to the throne, and yield the reins into his hands, with no other stipulation than that of liberty of conscience, which he violated with a baseness and ingratitude peculiar to his character. All the return he made them for the recovery of his power, consisted in depriving two thousand of their ministers, and involving the whole body in a persecution, by which not less than ten thousand are supposed to have perished in imprisonment and want. But their patriotism was not to be shaken by these injuries. When, towards the latter end of Charles the Second's reign, the character of his successor inspired a dread of the establishment of popery, to avert that evil they cheerfully acquiesced in an exclusion from all places

of emolument and trust; an extraordinary instance of magnanimity. When James the Second began to display arbitrary views, dissenters were among the first to take the alarm, regarding with jealousy even an indulgence when it flowed from a dispensing power. The zeal with which they cooperated in bringing about the revolution, the ardour with which they have always espoused its principles, are too well known to need any proof, and can only be rendered more striking by a contrast with the conduct of the high church party. The latter maintained, in its utmost extent, the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; were incessantly engaged in intrigues to overturn the revolution; and affirmed the doctrine of divine right to be an ancient and indisputable tenet of the English Church. Whoever wishes to ascertain the existence of those arts, by which they embroiled the reign of King William, may see them displayed at large in Burnet's History of his own Times.

The attachment of dissenters to the house of Hanover was signalized in a manner too remarkable to be soon forgotten. In the rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, they ventured on a breach of the law, by raising and officering regiments out of their own body; for which the parliament were reduced to the awkward expedient of passing an act of indemnity. This short sketch of their political conduct, as it is sufficient to establish their loyalty beyond suspicion, so may it well augment our surprise at the extreme obloquy and reproach with which they are treated. Mr. Hume, a competent judge, if ever there was one, of political principles, and who was far from being partial to dissenters, candidly confesses that to them we are indebted for the preservation of liberty.

The religious opinions of dissenters are so various, that there is perhaps no point in which they are agreed, except in asserting the rights of conscience against all human control and authority. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, under whom they began to make their appearance, their views of religious liberty have gradually extended, commencing at first with a disapprobation of certain rites and ceremonies, the remains of papal superstition. Their total separation from the church did not take place for more than a century after; till, despairing of seeing it erected on a comprehensive plan, and being morever persecuted for their difference of sentiment, they were compelled at last, reluctantly to withdraw. Having been thus directed by a train of events into the right path, they pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever, a sentiment in which they are now nearly united. On this very account, however, of all men they are least likely to disturb the peace of society; for they claim no other liberty than what they wish the whole human race to possess, that of deciding on every question where conscience is concerned. It is sufferance they plead for, not establishment; protection, not splendour. A disposition to impose their religion on others cannot be suspected in men, whose distinguishing religious tenet is the disavowal of all human authority.

Their opinion respecting establishments is founded upon reasons which appear to them weighty and solid. They have remarked, that in the three first and purest ages of religion, the church was a stranger to any alliance with temporal powers; that far from needing their aid, christianity never flourished so much as while they were combined to suppress it; and that the protection of Constantine, though well intended, diminished its purity more than it added to its splendour.

The only pretence for uniting christianity with civil government, is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society. But this benefit will be derived from it, at least in as great a degree, without an establishment as with it. Religion, if it has any power, operates on the *conscience* of men. Resting solely on the belief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions; but will appear to the most advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and tumults of worldly policy. Can it be imagined that a dissenter, who believes in di-

vine revelation, does not feel the same moral restraints, as if he had received his religion from the hands of parliament? Human laws may debase christianity, but can never improve it; and, being able to add nothing to its evidence, they can add nothing to its force.

Happy had it been, however, had civil establishments of religion been *useless* only, instead of being productive of the greatest evils. But, when christianity is established by law, it is requisite to give the preference to some particular system; and, as the magistrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his lending his sanction to the false as to the true. Splendour and emolument must likewise be in some degree attached to the national church: which are a strong inducement to its ministers to defend it, be it ever so remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent, and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed, continues, in spite of superior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the disagreement between the public creed of the church and the private sentiments of its ministers; an evil growing out of the very nature of an hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt. Hence the rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between church and state. Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall perceive the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter; and in Scotland, whose national church is one of the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer, that piety flourishes much more among dissenters, than among the members of any establishment whatever. This progress of things is so natural, that nothing seems to be wanting in any

country, to render the thinking part of the people infidels, but a splendid establishment. It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate, both in discipline and doctrine, every error and abuse.

Turn a christian society into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded, amidst the alarm that is felt for the splendour, opulence, and power which they are the means of supporting. To this alliance of christianity with civil power it is owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions, which, left to itself, had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.

Among the evils attending the alliance of church and state, it is not the least, that it begets a notion of their interests having some kind of inseparable, though mysterious connexion; so that they who are dissatisfied with the one must be enemies to the other. Our very language is tinctured with this delusion, in which church and king are blended together with an arrogance that seems copied from Cardinal Wolsey's *Ego et rex meus*, I and my king; as if the establishment were of more consequence than the sovereign who represents the collective majesty of the state. Let the interference of civil power be withdrawn, and the animosity of sects will subside for want of materials to inflame it; nor will any man suspect his neighbour for being of a different religion, more than for being of a different complexion from himself. The practice of toleration, it is true, has much abated the violence of those convulsions which, for more than a century from the beginning of the reformation, shook Europe to its base; but the source and spring of intolerance is by no means exhausted. The steam from that infernal pit will issue through the crevices, until they are filled up with the *ruins* of all human establishments.

The alliance between church and state is, in a *political point of view*, extremely suspicious, and much better fitted to the genius of an arbitrary than a free government. To the former it may yield a powerful support; to the latter it must ever prove dangerous. The spiritual submission it exacts is unfavourable to mental vigour, and prepares the way for a servile acquiescence in the encroachments of civil authority. This is so correspondent with *facts*, that the epithet high church, when applied to politics, is familiarly used in our language to convey the notion of arbitrary maxims of government.

As far as submission to civil magistrates is a branch of moral virtue, christianity will, under every form, be sure to enforce it; for, among the various sects and parties into which its profession is divided, there subsists an entire agreement respecting the moral duties it prescribes. To select, therefore, and endow a *particular order* of clergy to teach the duties of submission, is useless as a mean to secure the peace of a society, though well fitted to produce a slavish subjection. Ministers of that description, considering themselves as allies of the state, yet having no civil department, will be disposed, on all occasions, to strike in with the current of the court; nor are they likely to confine the obligation to obedience within any just and reasonable bounds. They will insensibly become an army of spiritual janizaries. Depending, as they every where must, upon the sovereign, his prerogative can never be exalted too high for their emolument, nor can any better instruments be contrived for the accomplishment of arbitrary designs. Their compact and united form, composing a chain of various links which hangs suspended from the throne, admirably fits them for conveying the impression that may soothe, inflame, or mislead the people.

These are the evils which, in my opinion, attach to civil establishments of christianity. They are, indeed, often mitigated by the virtue of their members; and among the English clergy in particular, as splendid examples of virtue and talents might be produced as any

which the annals of human nature can afford; but in all our reasonings concerning *men*, we must lay it down as a maxim, that the greater part are moulded by circumstances. If we wish to see the *true spirit* of an hierarchy, we have only to attend to the conduct of what is usually termed the high church party.

While they had sufficient influence with the legislature, they impelled it to persecute; and now that a more enlightened spirit has brought that expedient into disgrace, they turn to the people, and endeavour to inflame their minds by the arts of calumny and detraction. When the dissenters applied for the repeal of the corporation and test acts, an alarm was spread of the church being in danger, and their claim was defeated. From the late opposition of the bishops to the repeal of the penal statutes, we learn that they have lost the power rather than the inclination to persecute, or they would be happy to abolish the monuments of a spirit they ceased to approve. The nonsense and absurdity comprised in that part of our laws would move laughter in a company of peasants; but nothing is thought mean or contemptible which is capable of being forged into a weapon of hostility against dissenters. To perpetuate laws which there is no intention to execute, is certainly the way to bring law into contempt; but the truth is, that unwilling to relinquish the right of persecution, though they have no immediate opportunity of exerting it, they retain these statutes as a body in reserve, ready to be brought into the field on the first occasion that shall offer.*

The prejudice entertained against us, is not the work of a day, but the accumulation of ages, flowing from the fixed antipathy of a numerous and powerful order of men, distributed through all the classes of

* This disgrace to the legislation of a great and free country has at length, but not till more than a third part of a century had elapsed after the above reproach was penned, been finally removed, by an enactment for which the Dissenters are especially indebted to the able and zealous exertions of that noble example and advocate of all liberal principles, LORD JOHN RUSSELL.—ED.

society; nor is it easy to conceive to what a pitch popular resentment may be inflamed by artful management and contrivance. Our situation in this respect bears a near resemblance to that of the primitive christians, against whom, though in themselves the most inoffensive of mankind, the malice of the populace was directed, to a still greater degree, by similar arts and upon similar principles. The clamour of the fanatic rabble, the devout execration of dissenters, will remind the reader of ecclesiastical history of the excesses of pagan ferocity, when the people, instigated by their priests, were wont to exclaim, *Christianos ad leones.* There is the less hope of this animosity being allayed, from its having arisen from *permanent causes.* That christianity is a simple institution, unallied to worldly power; that a church is a voluntary society, invested with a right to choose its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jesus Christ; that ministers are brethren whose emolument should be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people, are maxims drawn from so high an authority, that it may well be apprehended that the church is doomed to vanish before them. Under these circumstances, whatever portion of talents or of worth dissenters may possess, serves only to render them more hated, because more formidable. Had they merely revelled with the wanton, and drunk with the drunken; had they been clothed with curses, they might have been honoured and esteemed notwithstanding, as true sons of the church; but their dissent is a crime too indelible in the eyes of their enemies for any virtue to alleviate, or any merit to efface.

Till the test business was agitated, however, we were not aware of our labouring under such a weight of prejudice. Confiding in the mildness of the times, and conscious that every trace of resentment was vanished from our own breasts, we fondly imagined that those of churchmen were equally replete with sentiments of generosity and candour. We accordingly ventured on a renewal of our claim as men, and as citizens; but had not proceeded far, before we were assailed with the bitterest reproaches. The innocent design of relieving ourselves from a disgraceful proscription, was construed by our enemies into an attack on the church and state. Their opposition was both more violent and more formidable than was expected. They let us see, that however languidly the flame of their devotion may burn, that of resentment and party spirit, like vestal fire, must never be extinguished in their temples. Calumnies continued to be propagated, till they produced the riots at Birmingham, that ever memorable æra in the annals of bigotry and fanaticism, when Europe beheld, with astonishment and regret, the outrage sustained by philosophy in the most enlightened of countries and in the first of her sons! When we hear such excesses as these justified and applauded, we seem to be falling back apace into the darkness of the middle ages.

The connexion between civil and religious liberty is too intimate to make it surprising, that they who are attached to the one should be friendly to the other. The dissenters have accordingly seldom failed to lend their support to men who seemed likely to restore the vigour of a sinking constitution. Parliamentary reform has been cherished by them with an ardour equal to its importance. This part of their character inflames opposition still farther; and affords a pretext to their enemies for overwhelming the cause of liberty under an obnoxious name. The reproach on this head, however, is felt as an honour, when it appears by their conduct that they despair of attacking liberty with success, while the reputation of dissenters remains undiminished. The enmity of the vicious is the test of virtue.

Dissenters are reproached with the appellation of republicans; but the truth of the charge has neither appeared from facts, nor been supported by any reasonable evidence. Among them, as among other classes (and in no greater proportion), there are persons to be found, no doubt, who, without any hostility to the present government, prefer in theory a republican to a monarchical form; a point on which the most enlightened men in all ages have entertained very different opinions. In a

government like ours, consisting of three simple elements, as this variety of sentiment may naturally be expected to take place, so if any predilection be felt toward one more than another, that partiality seems most commendable which inclines to the republican part. At most it is only the love of liberty to excess. The mixture of monarchy and nobility is chiefly of use, as it gives regularity, order, and stability to popular freedom. Were we, however, without any proof, to admit that dissenters are more tinctured with republican principles than others, it might be considered as the natural effect of the absurd conduct of the legislature. Exposed to pains and penalties, excluded from all offices of trust, proscribed by the spirit of the present reign, menaced and insulted wherever they appear, they must be more than men if they felt no resentment, or were passionately devoted to the ruling powers. To expect affection in return for injury, is to gather where they have not scattered, and reap where they have not sown. The superstition of dissenters is not so abject as to prompt them to worship the constitution through fear. Yet as they have not forgotten the benefits it imparted, and the protection it afforded till of late, they are too much its friends to flatter its defects or defend its abuses. Their only wish is to see it reformed and reduced to its original principles.

In recent displays of loyalty they must acknowledge themselves extremely defective. They have never plundered their neighbours to show their attachment to the King; nor has their zeal for religion ever broke out into oaths and execrations. They have not proclaimed their respect for regular government by a breach of the laws; or attempted to maintain tranquillity by riots. These beautiful specimens of loyalty belong to the virtue and moderation of the high church party alone, with whose character they perfectly correspond.

In a scurrilous paper which has been lately circulated with malignant industry, the dissenters at large, and Dr. Price in particular, are accused, with strange effrontery, of having involved us in the American war; when it is

well known they ever stood aloof from that scene of guilt and blood.

Had their remonstrances been regarded, the calamities of that war had never been incurred; but, what is of more consequence in the estimation of anonymous scribblers, there would have remained one lie less to swell the catalogue of their falsehoods.

From the joy which dissenters have expressed at the French revolution, it has been most absurdly inferred that they wish for a similar event in England, without considering that such a conclusion is a libel on the British constitution, as it must proceed on a supposition that our government is as despotic as the ancient monarchy of France. To imagine the feelings must be the same when the objects are so different, shows a most lamentable degree of malignity and folly.

Encompassed as dissenters are by calumny and reproach, they have still the satisfaction to reflect, that these have usually been the lot of distinguished virtue; and that, in the corrupt state of men's interests and passions, the unpopularity of a cause is rather a presumption of its excellence.

They will be still more happy if the frowns of the world should be the means of reviving that spirit of evangelical piety which once distinguished them so highly. Content if they can gain protection, without being so romantic as to aspire to praise, they will continue firm, I doubt not, in those principles which they have hitherto acted on, unseduced by rewards, and unshaken by dangers. From the passions of their enemies they will appeal to the judgement of posterity;—a more impartial tribunal. Above all, they will calmly await the decision of the Great Judge, before whom both they and their enemies must appear, and the springs and sources of their mutual animosity be laid open; when the clouds of misrepresentation being scattered, it will be seen they are a virtuous and oppressed people, who are treading, though with unequal steps, in the path of those illustrious prophets, apostles, and martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy. In the mean time they are

far from envying the popularity and applause which may be acquired in a contrary course; esteeming the reproaches of freedom above the splendours of servitude.

Section VI.

On the Causes of the present Discontents.

We have arrived, it is a melancholy truth which can no longer be concealed, we have at length arrived at that crisis when nothing but speedy and effectual reform can save us from ruin. An amendment in the representation is wanted, as well to secure the liberty we already possess, as to open the way for the removal of those abuses which pervade every branch of the administration. The accumulation of debt and taxes, to a degree unexampled in any other age or country, has so augmented the influence of the crown, as to destroy the equipoise and balance of the constitution. The original design of the funding system, which commenced in the reign of King William, was to give stability to the revolution, by engaging the monied interest to embark on its bottom. It immediately advanced the influence of the crown, which the whigs then exalted as much as possible, as a countervail to the interest of the Pretender.

The mischief of this short-sighted policy cannot be better described than in the language of Bolingbroke. "Few men," says he, "at that time looked forward enough to foresee the consequences of the new constitution of the revenue that was soon afterward formed, nor of the method of the funding system that immediately took place; which, absurd, as they are, have continued since, till it has become scarce possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the multiplication of taxes, and the creation of funds, would increase yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties by a natural and necessary progression into a more real, though less apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution; a due reflection on the experience of

other ages and countries, would have pointed out national corruption as the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so vast a revenue; and also, the loss of liberty as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption."*

If there be any truth in these reflections, how much must our apprehensions be heightened by the prodigious augmentation of revenue and debt, since the time of George the First! What a harvest has been reaped from the seeds of corruption then sown! The revenue is now upwards of seventeen millions; and though nine are employed to pay the interest of the national debt, this is small consolation, when we reflect that that debt is the remnant of wasteful, destructive wars, and that, till there is a change in the system, we are continually liable to similar calamities. The multiplied channels through which seventeen millions of money must flow into the treasury, the legion of officers it creates, the patronage its expenditure on the several branches of the administration supplies, have rendered the influence of the crown nearly absolute and decisive. The control of parliament sinks under this pressure into formality: the balance of the different orders becomes a mere theory, which serves to impose upon ignorance and varnish corruption. There is no power in the state that can act as a sufficient antagonist to the silent irresistible force of royal patronage.

The influence of the crown, by means of its revenue, is more dangerous than prerogative, in proportion as corruption operates after a more concealed manner than force. A violent act of prerogative is sensibly felt, and creates an alarm; but it is the nature of corruption to lay apprehension asleep, and to effect its purposes while the forms of liberty remain undisturbed. The first employs force to enslave the people; the second employs the people to enslave themselves. The most determined enemy to freedom can wish for nothing more than the continuance of present abuses. While the semblance of

* Letter II. on the Study of History.

representation can be maintained, while popular delusion can be kept up, he will spare the *extremities* of liberty. He aims at a higher object, that of *striking at the heart.*

A fatal lethargy has long been spreading amongst us, attended, as is natural, with a prevailing disposition both in and out of parliament, to treat plans of reform with contempt. After the accession, place and pension bills were frequently passed by the commons, though rejected by the lords; nothing of that nature is now ever attempted. A standing army in time of peace was a subject of frequent complaint, and is expressly provided against by the Bill of Rights; it is now become a part of the constitution; for though the nominal direction be placed in parliament, the mutiny bill passes as a matter of course, the forces are never disbanded; the more completely to detach them from the community, barracks are erected; and martial law is established in its utmost severity. If freedom can survive this expedient, copied from the practice of foreign despots, it will be an instance of unexampled good fortune. Mr. Hume terms it a mortal distemper in the British constitution, of which it must *inevitably* perish.

To whatever cause it be owing, it is certain the measures of administration have, during the present reign, leaned strongly towards arbitrary power. The decision on the Middlesex election was a blow aimed at the vitals of the constitution. Before the people had time to recover from their panic, they were plunged into the American war—a war of pride and ambition, and ending in humiliation and disgrace. The spirit of the government is so well understood, that the most violent even of the clergy are content to drop their animosity, to turn their affections into a new channel, and to devote to the house of Hanover the flattery and the zeal by which they ruined the race of Stuart. There cannot be a clearer symptom of the decay of liberty than the dread of speculative opinions; which is, at present, carried to a length in this nation that can scarcely be exceeded. Englishmen were accustomed till of late, to

make political speculation the amusement of leisure, and the employment of genius; they are now taught to fear it more than death. Under the torpid touch of despotism the patriotic spirit has shrunk into a narrow compass; confined to gaze with admiration on the proceedings of parliament, and listen to the oracles of the minister with silent acquiescence, and pious awe. Abuses are sacred, and the pool of corruption must putrify in peace. Persons who a few years back were clamorous for reform, are making atonement for having been betrayed into any appearance of virtue, by a quick return to their natural character. Is not the kingdom peopled with spies and informers? Are not inquisitorial tribunals erected in every corner of the land? A stranger who, beholding a whole nation filled with alarm, should inquire the cause of the commotion, would be a little surprised on being informed, that instead of any appearance of insurrection, or plots, a pamphlet had only been published. In a government upheld by so immense a revenue, and boasting a constitution declared to be the envy of the world, this abject distrust of its own power is more than a million lectures on corruptions and abuses. The wisdom of ages, the master-piece of human policy, complete in all its parts, and that needs no reformation, can hardly support itself against a sixpenny pamphlet, devoid, it is said, of truth or ability! To require sycophants to blush, is exacting too great a departure from the decorum of their character: but common sense might be expected to remain, after shame is extinguished.

Whoever seriously contemplates the present infatuation of the people, and the character of the leaders, will be tempted to predict the speedy downfall of liberty. They cherish the forms, while they repress the spirit of the constitution; they persecute freedom, and adorn its sepulchre. When corruption has struck its roots so deep, it may be doubted whether even the liberty of the press be not of more detriment than advantage. The prints, which are the common sources of information, are replete with falsehood; virtue is calumniated; and

scarcely are any characters safe from their blast, except the advocates of corruption. The greater part, no doubt are in the pay of ministry, or their adherents. Thus delusion spreads, and the people are instructed to confound anarchy with reform, their friends with their oppressors.

Who can hear, without indignant contempt, the minister's annual eulogium on the English constitution? Is the parliament so ignorant, then, that it needs to go to school every session to learn those elements of political knowledge which every Briton understands? Or is the nature of the British constitution a secret in the breast of the ministry to be opened with the budget? Indisputable excellence wants no encomium; but this flattery is intended to bury, in an admiration of its merit, all remembrance of its defects. Whatever remains of beauty or vigour it possesses, are held in no estimation but as they produce an acquiescence in abuses. It is its imperfections only ministers admire; its corruptions that solace them. The topics of their encomium are as absurd as the purpose is infamous. The flourishing state of trade and manufactures is displayed in proof of the unequalled excellence of the British constitution, without reflecting that a temporary decay will support with equal force an opposite conclusion. For if we owe our present prosperity to the nature of the government, our recent calamities must be traced to the same source, and that constitution which is now affirmed to be the best, must be allowed during the American war to have been the worst. That there is a connexion between commercial prosperity and the nature of a government, must be admitted; but its operation is gradual and slow, not felt from year to year, but to be traced by the comparison of one age and country with another. But, allowing that our wealth may increase along with the increase of abuses, the nation, we hope, is not so sordid as to look upon wealth as the supreme good; however well that idea may correspond with the views of a ministry, who seem determined to leave us no other. Freedom as it animates industry, by securing its rewards,

opens a path to wealth, but if that wealth be suffered to debase a people, and render them venal and dependent, it will silently conduct them back again to misery and depression. Rome was never more opulent than on the eve of departing liberty. Her vast wealth was a sediment that remained on the reflux of the tide. It is quite unnecessary to remind the reader how all this at present is reversed, and that the unbounded prodigality of Mr. Pitt and his successors in the conduct of the war, which the corruption of parliament enabled them to maintain, has plunged the nation into the deepest abyss of poverty and distress.

It is singular enough, but I hope not ominous, that the flattery bestowed by the poets of antiquity on the ruling powers resembles, in everything but its elegance, the adulation of modern sycophants. The extent of empire, the improvement of arts, the diffusion of opulence and splendour, are the topics with which Horace adorned the praises of Augustus: but the penetration of Tacitus developes, amidst these flattering appearances, the seeds of ruin. The florid bloom but ill concealed that fatal malady which preyed upon the vitals.

Between the period of national honour and complete degeneracy, there is usually an interval of national vanity, during which examples of virtue are recounted and admired without being imitated. The Romans were never more proud of their ancestors than when they ceased to resemble them. From being the freest and most high-spirited people in the world, they suddenly fell into the tamest and most abject submission. Let not the name of Britons, my countrymen, too much elate you; nor ever think yourselves safe while you abate one jot of that holy jealousy by which your liberties have been hitherto secured. The richer the inheritance bequeathed you, the more it merits your care for its preservation. The possession must be continued by that spirit with which it was at first acquired; and, as it was gained by vigilance, it will be lost by supineness. A degenerate race repose on the merit of their forefathers; the virtuous create a fund of their own. The

former look back upon their ancestors, to hide their shame: the latter look forward to posterity, to levy a tribute of admiration. In vain will you confide in the forms of a free constitution. Unless you reanimate those forms with fresh vigour, they will be melancholy memorials of what you once were, and haunt you with the shade of departed liberty. A silent stream of corruption poured over the whole land, has tainted every branch of the administration with decay. On your temperate but manly exertions depend the happiness and freedom of the latest posterity. That Assembly which sits by right of representation, will be little inclined to oppose your will, expressed in a firm, decisive manner. You may be deafened by clamour, misled by sophistry, or weakened by division, but you cannot be despised with impunity. A vindictive ministry may hang the terrors of criminal prosecution over the heads of a few with success; but at their peril will they attempt to intimidate a nation. The trick of associations, of pretended plots, and silent insurrections, will oppose a feeble barrier to the impression of the popular mind.

The theory of the constitution in the most important particulars is a satire on the practice. The theory provides the responsibility of ministers as a check to the execution of ill designs; but in reality we behold the basest of the tribe retreat from the ruin of their country, loaded with honours and with spoils. Theory tells us the parliament is free and independent; experience will correct the mistake by showing its subservience to the crown. We learn, from the first, that the legislature is chosen by the unbiassed voice of all who can be supposed to have a will of their own; we learn, from the last, the pretended electors are but a handful of the people, who are never less at their own disposal than in the business of election. The theory holds out equal benefits to all, and equal liberty, without any other discrimination than that of a good and bad subject: its practice brands with proscription and disgrace a numerous class of inhabitants on account of their religion. In theory, the several orders of the state are a check on

each other; but corruption has oiled the wheels of that machinery, harmonized its motions, and enabled it to bear, with united pressure, on the happiness of the people.

The principal remedy for the diseases of the state is undoubtedly a reform in parliament; from which, as a central point, inferior improvements may issue; but as I have already treated on that subject at large, I shall not insist on it here. I cannot close this pamphlet, however, without adverting for a moment to a few of the principal objects which well merit the attention of the legislature.

On the abuses in the church, it is to little purpose to expatiate, as they are too numerous to be detailed, and too inveterate to be corrected. Unless it be a maxim that honesty will endanger her existence, her creeds ought in all reason to correspond with the sentiments of her members. The world, it is to be feared, will be little edified by the example of a church, which, in compelling its ministers to subscribe to opinions that few of them believe, is a discipline of fraud. Nor is the collection of tithes calculated to soften the odium. As a mode of union with the parishioners, they are fruitful of contention; as a restraint on the improvement of land, impolitic and oppressive; as a remnant of the Jewish law, superstitious and absurd. True magnanimity would instruct the clergy to recede from a claim which they will probably be compelled shortly to relinquish. But no reform, it seems, must take place in the church any more than in the state, that its corruptions may keep pace with the progress of its ally.

The condition of the poor in this country, calls for compassion and redress. Many of them, through the want of mental improvement, are sunk almost beneath the level of humanity;* and their hard-earned pittance

* The change in this respect, since the first publication of the "Apology," is of the most gratifying kind. All ranks of society, and all persuasions of christians, have vied with each other in their efforts to give religious and other useful instruction to the children of the poor. Still, there remains much to be done, and we are with respect

is so diminished by taxes, that it is with the utmost difficulty they can nourish their children, and utterly impossible to afford them education. The poor laws enacted for their relief, by confining their industry to a particular spot, and denying them the privilege of residing where they may exert it to the greatest advantage, are an accumulated oppression. Were industry allowed to find its level, were the poor laws abolished, and a small portion of that expense which swells the tide of corruption, the splendours of the great, and the miseries of war, bestowed on the instruction of the common people, the happy effects would descend to the remotest posterity, and open a prospect which humanity might delight to anticipate. In England, we have been adding wheel to wheel, and spring to spring, till we have rendered the machine of government far too complicated; forgetting, in the midst of wars, negotiations, and factious disputes, that the true end of civil polity is the happiness of the people. We have listened to every breeze that moves along the surface of Europe, and descried danger from afar; while deaf to the complaints of the poor, we have beheld ignorance, wretchedness and barbarity multiply at home, without the smallest regard. Is it possible to behold with patience the numberless tribe of placemen, pensioners, and sycophants who are enriched at the public expense; a noxious spawn engendered by the corruptions of government, and nourished by its diseases. Were our immense revenue conducive to the maintenance of royal dignity, or proportioned to the exigencies of the state, it would be borne with pleasure; but, at present it bids fair to be the purchase of our servitude.

Our laws, in order to become a proper rule of civil life, much want revision and amendment. They are, moreover, never promulgated. For this omission, Judge Blackstone assigns a very curious reason: "That being enacted by our representatives, every man is supposed,

to the general education of the lower classes, *very* far behind the Americans, especially those in the state of New York.—Ed.

in the eye of the law, to be present in the legislature." It would be an improvement on this delegated knowledge of the law, if the penalty were also delegated, and criminals punished by representation. The laws, in their present state, are so piled into volumes, encumbered with precedents, and perplexed with intricacies, that they are often rather a snare than a guide, and are a fruitful source of the injustice they are intend to prevent. The expense is as formidable as the penalty; nor is it to any purpose to say they are the same to the poor as to the rich, while by their delay, expense, and perplexity, they are placed on an eminence, which opulence only can ascend. The commendation bestowed so liberally by foreigners on English jurisprudence, was never meant to be extended to our municipal code, which is confused, perplexed, and sanguinary in the extreme; but to the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality which marks the conduct of the judges. For want of gradual improvements, to enable it to keep pace with the progress of society, the most useful operations of law are clouded by fictions.*

These are a few only of the maladies which indicate a bad habit of the political body; nor can a true estimate be made of our situation so much by adverting to *particular evils*, as by an attention to the general aspect of affairs. The present crisis is, in my apprehension, the fullest of terror and of danger we have ever experienced. In the extension of excise laws, in the erection of barracks, in the determined adherence to abuses displayed by parliament, in the desertion of pretended patriots, the spread of arbitrary principles, the tame subdued spirit of the nation, we behold the seeds of political ruin quickening into life. The *securities* of liberty, as was long since remarked by Dr. Price, have given way; and what remains is little more than an *indulgence*, which cannot continue long, when it ceases to be cherished in the affections of the people. The little of public virtue that still subsists, is no match for disciplined armies of

* See an excellent publication on this subject, entitled "Juridical Essays," by Mr. Randall.

corruption. The people are perishing for lack of knowledge. Disquieted by imaginary alarms, insensible to the real danger that awaits them, they are taught to court that servitude which will be a source of misery to themselves and to posterity.

Deplorable as the prospect is, a precarious hope may be founded, perhaps, on the magnitude of abuses. There is, it has often been remarked, an ultimate point, both of elevation and depression, in the affairs of kingdoms, to which, when they arrive, they begin to turn of their own accord, and to fall back into their ancient channels. We are certainly entitled to all the comfort that consideration is capable of affording. Taxation can hardly be more oppressive, representation more venal and inadequate, the influence of the people more extinguished, or falsehood and deception more triumphant, than they are at present.

There is also another circumstance attending the present crisis, which, if we are wise enough to improve it, may be of the utmost advantage. Of the numberless political parties which have hitherto distracted our attention, and divided our attachment, there now remain but two; the patrons of corruption, and the friends of liberty; they who are waiting for the disorders of government to ripen into arbitrary power, and they who are anxious to bring back the constitution to its original principles. The colours by which they are distinguished are too bold and strong to be ever confounded; or if there could be any possible embarrassment in the choice, the ministry have condescended to remove that obscurity, by pursuing an interest not only distinct from, but directly opposed to that of the people. The clamour of whigs and tories hath happily subsided; and pretended patriots are at length so kind as to unmask before the people, and stand forth in their native character, the objects of just detestation. We cannot wish for better lessons of public virtue than is furnished by the contrast of their vices.

On the present war, until the views of the ministry are more unfolded, it behoves me to speak with tenderness and reserve. If nothing more be intended than the

maintenance of national honour, and the faith of treaties, it will merit the warmest support of every well-wisher to his country. But if the re-establishment of the ancient government of France be any part of the object; if it be a war with freedom, a confederacy of kings against the rights of man; it will be the last humiliation and disgrace that can be inflicted on Great Britain; and, were there any truth in tales of incantation, to behold us engaged in such a cause, were enough to disturb the repose of our ancestors, and move the ashes of the dead! The steps preparatory to the war, the inflamed passions, and the character of our allies, afford an ill omen of the temper with which it will be conducted. The pretence respecting the Netherlands certainly entitles the ministry to the praise of consistence. It is quite of a piece with the candour and sincerity which affirmed the balance of Europe to be destroyed by the seizure of Oczakow, but denied it was endangered by the conquest of Poland, and the invasion of France.

The French revolution, we cannot but remember, was from the first an object of jealousy to ministers. There needed not the late unhappy excesses, the massacres of September, and the execution of Louis, to excite or display their hostility. It appeared in the insult and derision of their retainers, from the highest to the lowest. If they meant fairly to the interests of general liberty, why that uneasiness at the fall of despotism in a neighbouring country? Why render parliament a theatre of abuse on a revolution, whose commencement was distinguished by unexampled mildness and tranquillity? But this part of their conduct was likewise consistent. Intent on the destruction of liberty in one country, they were disconcerted at seeing it revive in another; and before they ventured to extinguish the dying taper, waited for the surrounding scene to be shut up in darkness. I am perfectly aware, that to speak in terms of decency and respect of the French revolution, is to incur, in the prevailing disposition of the times, the last of infamies. If we dare to rejoice at the emancipation of a great people from thraldom, it must be at the peril of the foulest im-

putations that imagination can invent, or malignity apply. In contempt, however, of these calumnies, I am free to confess, the French revolution has always appeared to me, and does still appear, the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history. The friends of liberty contemplate the crimes and disorders with which it has been stained* with the deepest regret; but they still hope that they will in the result be more than compensated, by the grandeur of its principles, and the beneficence of its effects. Instead of wishing for a similar event in England, they are intent on reform chiefly to avoid that necessity. Under every *form* of government they know how to recognise the divine aspect of freedom, and without it can be satisfied with none. The evils of anarchy and of despotism are two extremes which they equally dread; and between which no middle path can be found, but that of effectual reform. To avert the calamities that await us on either side, the streams of corruption must be drained off, the independence of parliament restored, the ambition of aristocracy repressed, and the majesty of the people lift itself up. It is possible to retreat from the brink of a precipice, but woe to that nation which sleeps upon it!

* The execution of the king was certainly a most cruel and unjustifiable transaction, alike repugnant to law, order, and humanity. Without being conducive to any views of policy whatever, it seems to have been merely a gratification of the most detestable passions. The treatment of the beautiful and unfortunate queen, and of the royal family, is barbarous and unmanly in the extreme. When we look at their sufferings, humanity weeps, and pity forgets their crimes.

REVIEW

OF THE

APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

PUBLISHED IN

THE CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN:

AND

MR. HALL'S REPLY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1822.]

REVIEW

OF

MR. HALL'S FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.*

Extracted from the Christian Guardian for Jan. 1822.

"THE political principles of the Bible are simple, distinct, and plain. The sacred writers enter into no niceties, draw no lines of exact demarcation, meet no involved cases of civil casuistry; but, speaking of mankind generally as alike depraved and unruly, and of governments as the creations of God's providence, they inculcate, without qualification, reservation, or restriction, the obvious and indispensable duties of submission, honour, and obedience.

"It has been, however, very much the fashion of late, to get rid of these unpleasant and '*degrading*' injunctions, by pleading the change of time and circumstances, and the difference between the laws and system of government under which we are privileged to live, and those of the apostolic days. Now, as to the general duty of obedience, it is obvious that it must apply rather *more* than *less* strongly to those who live under a paternal government, than to those who live under a tyrannical one. At the same time we are ready to allow, that the system of freedom which, in this country, gives to the people a share in the legislature, and an influence over the government, renders the submission due from them

* In order that the propriety of Mr. Hall's reply may be fairly estimated, it has been thought right to reprint the original article that called it forth.—ED.

less *implicit* and *uninquiring*, at the same time that it increases the obligation to its cheerful payment.

"But, although it be conceded that, under a constitution which renders the people a party to their own government, it is lawful and proper for laymen to interest themselves intimately in political concerns, and even to a certain extent to participate in political contests,—there is one body of men whom we could ever wish to see taking no other part in these matters than as moderators, instructors, and peacemakers.

"The ministers of the gospel must, in the discharge of their duty,—they must, if they will '*declare the whole counsel* of God,' sometimes touch upon those passages of scripture which inculcate the *duties of subjects*. While St. Paul, in the days of Nero himself, was led by the Holy Spirit to write, 'Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;' and to pronounce, without hesitation, 'He that resisteth the power,' tyrannical as it was in the extreme, 'resisteth the ordinance of God;' and while similar passages abound in the inspired volume, it cannot be thought consistent with the character of a preacher of the gospel to maintain an absolute *silence* on these topics. But there is one rule which, in our opinion, ministers would do well to follow, and that is, to go no further than the Bible will carry them. The war of parties and factions, the continual struggle of political leaders, the various questions of constitutional casuistry, are subjects which lie beyond this boundary, and with which they would do well not to embroil themselves. The servant of the Lord is exhorted 'not to strive,' but 'to cut off occasion from them which desire occasion:' and assuredly he will find that the bare discharge of his plain duty in these things will expose him to sufficient obloquy and reproach.

"Entertaining this view of the subject, it is with sorrow that we observe the republication, under his own immediate sanction, of Mr. Hall's 'Apology for the Freedom of the Press.' This work was first given to the world about thirty

years ago, and has been long since forgotten, or remembered only as one of the sins of its author's youth. Since its disappearance, Mr. H. has so much better employed his time and his great talents, that he may now be considered as standing in the very first rank among the Nonconformists of the present day. And is it not a lamentable thing to see such a man stepping forward, in the ripeness of his years, and at the height of his well-earned reputation, to obtrude himself on the public in the degraded character of a violent party-scribe? And yet, in what other light can we consider the man who, in so uncalled-for and gratuitous a manner, and at so comparatively peaceful a period, sends into the world, with the sanction of his name and of his latest corrections, a new edition of such a pamphlet as this?

"He indeed states, as an excuse for the republication, that the term of copyright being expired, it was no longer in his power to prevent the reprinting of his work. The law, however, is not so; the power of perpetuating its oblivion lay still in his hands. But, had he even been correct on this point, where was the necessity for his being an active agent in this reappearance?

"To characterize the tract before us appropriately, we need only observe, that the principal topics discussed by this '*minister of the gospel*' are, the right of public discussion, the propriety of political associations, *parliamentary reform*, the rights of men, the character of dissenters, the present discontents. The work is extremely personal, and great bitterness is shown towards the late Bishop Horsley, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Pitt. We shall not imitate Mr. Hall's example, by entering into a discussion on the subject of Mr. Pitt's political character: but we should have hoped that the reflection of his undoubted integrity, and of that perfect devotion to his country, which led him to sacrifice even life itself in its service, might have spared him, at the distance of sixteen years from his death, a new volley of bitter reproach from one whose vocation is '*the gospel of peace*.'

"As to the character of Bishop Horsley, it is now placed far beyond the reach of his adversaries; and the christian world will know how to appreciate invectives against such a man, from one who is at the same time the eulogist of Priestley and Price, the Socinians, and of Mary Wolstonecraft, the female libertine and deist.

"Looking then upon this work, as one of which a critical analysis would be ill placed in the pages of the Christian Guardian, we shall conclude with a specimen or two of the political creed of Mr. Hall, and of the manner in which he supports it.

"He is then, as far as professed doctrine can make him, plainly and clearly a radical reformer. He pleads for 'annual parliaments,' for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the *exclusion* of the relatives of noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for 'the sovereignty of the people.' In what part of the sacred volume he has discovered the least sanction for any one of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine.

"In fact, the whole pamphlet is an argument in favour of the supremacy and infallibility of the people, and of the necessity of paying the most implicit obedience to the least expression of their will. Now, could these notions have been carried into practice at the time they were written (soon after the Birmingham riots), and could a legislature have been formed upon Mr. H.'s universal suffrage plan, the necessary and inevitable consequence would have been, that, as the feeling of the multitude ran violently against all the friends of the French revolution, Mr. H. and most of his fellow-labourers and admirers would have been silenced, banished, or hanged. So much for the *effects* which might be expected to follow Mr. Hall's plan. And as for the *principles* upon which that plan is founded, we find him broadly stating, in the latter end of this work, with admirable consistency, that 'calumny and reproach are usually the lot of distinguished virtue,' and that '*the unpopularity of a cause is rather a presumption of its excellence.*' Now, if the fact be so, it cannot be for the good of the people that this perpetually erroneous criterion should govern the affairs of the state.

"Mr. Hall concludes his prefixed advertisement, with the hope 'that the reader will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expressions, that the work is an *eulogium on a dead friend;*' which is asserting, in other words, that the press is enslaved, and its liberty departed. And, having written this some years since, he now coolly republishes it, after witnessing the acquittals of Hone and Wooller, and while the wretched Carlile is braving every effort that can be made to stop the torrent of blasphemy which has so long issued from his warehouse.

"Again, Mr. H. assured us, thirty years since, that we had then '*at length arrived* at that crisis when nothing but speedy and effectual reform could save us from ruin.' Now, since the first publication of this prediction, we have maintained a contest of long duration with the greatest conqueror of modern times, and have fairly subdued him. We have immensely augmented the extent of our empire, and increased its ratio of population. We have tripled our commerce and our revenue. We have improved, it is to be hoped, the state of our internal population, by the establishment of schools and the increase of places of worship; and we have made some progress, in the commencement at least, of the great work of evangelizing the whole world.

"And after all this, Mr. Hall comes forward, with much admirable simplicity, to tell us of this wonderful prophecy of his, delivered only the third part of a century since, that without *immediate reform in parliament, ruin* was then *inevitable.* Now, it is certain, that this same *immediate reform* has not yet taken place, although one whole generation has passed away since the promulgation of this prediction. Has the dreadful alternative, then, fallen upon us? Have we been crushed by this *inevitable ruin?*

"The present comparatively prosperous and improving circumstances of the kingdom answers, No! to this question. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better*, and not *worse*, than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage.

"If there be any exception to this state of general improvement, it is to be found in the depression of the agricultural interest of the country. But we are told, by those who ought to be judges, that the evils which threaten these classes have arisen from the want of sufficient legislative protection. And do we not know, from the conduct of the mobs of 1815, that a reformed parliament, a universal suffrage parliament, according to Mr. Hall's plan, would have withheld even the partial protection which has hitherto been granted, and would have thereby made, what is now distress and perplexity, absolute ruin and destruction? So much for the necessity and the effects of reform.

"It is with the most painful feelings that we are thus compelled to animadvert on this uncalled-for and altogether unnecessary republication. We repeat, that the general principle on which we disapprove of it is, that a minister of the gospel will always best consult the interests of his flock, and the dignity of his own character, by abstaining from any political discussion which transgresses the bounds prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Hall has overstepped these limits, and has plunged into the thickest of the war of party politics. He has also chosen, we apprehend, the side which was generally found in most direct opposition to the scripture injunctions of peace, quietness, and obedience. And as the weight of his character, and the authority of his name, render error from his pen trebly dangerous, we have felt only the more imperatively called upon to enter our protest against the principles which he has endeavoured to lay down, and to unmask the sophistry of the arguments by which he has attempted to support them."

MR. HALL'S REPLY.

To the Editor of the Leicester Journal.

SIR,

A VIOLENT attack on my character having appeared in your paper a few weeks since, contained in an extract from a periodical work, entitled the *Christian Guardian*, I rely on your impartiality for permitting me to repel the accusation through the same medium. If the misrepresentations which I have to complain of had been confined within the bounds of decency, I should have consulted my ease by remaining silent: but the writer, whoever he is, has availed himself of the impunity attached to anonymous communications so unsparingly, that I might be justly charged, not only with a criminal indifference to character, but with being accessary to the delusion of the public, were I to make no reply.

The amount of my offence consists in uttering a new edition of a political pamphlet, which made its appearance many years since, and passed through several editions. This writer says, I might have suppressed it; but the contrary is the fact. The term of copyright is well known to extend to fourteen years, after which any one is at liberty to republish a work without the consent of the Author. More than that time had elapsed since the last edition, and as it was at the option of any bookseller to reprint it, so I was assured from various quarters, that, whether I consented or not, it would certainly be republished. The only alternative that remained was,

either to suffer it to come forth in a form, perhaps, most incorrect, and mingled with foreign infusions, or to publish it under my own eye, and with such alterations and corrections as the Author might deem proper. The latter was preferred, and for this a torrent of invective has issued from the *Christian Guardian.*

It certainly is very unusual for a writer to suppress his own publications, unless he has recanted the principles they contain. To persevere in doing so, naturally exposes him to the suspicion, either that he has renounced his former opinions, or that he is afraid to avow them: but neither of these situations is mine. I have changed no principle, and I feel no fear. Why, then, should I act in such a manner as must render me perpetually liable to either of these imputations? For a considerable time, indeed, after loud and repeated importunities, I declined a compliance with the wishes expressed for republication, from a sincere reluctance to engage in political controversy. By one party, in the mean while, it was my fortune to be so unequivocally claimed as a convert, and by the other so assailed with reproaches as an apostate, that I was convinced by experience there was no other way of putting an end to the misrepresentations of both, but to republish the original pamphlet. Had I never written it, the same motives which made me reluctant to reprint, might probably have prevented my writing it; but since there is not a principle in it which I can conscientiously retract, and my silence has occasioned numerous misrepresentations and mistakes, the fair and manly part was doubtless to republish it. An ingenuous mind is not less ashamed of receiving praises it is conscious it has not deserved, than indignant at reproaches which are not merited.

But a minister of the gospel, it seems, is on no occasion to meddle with party politics. How exactly this maxim was adhered to at the commencement of the late war, when military banners were consecrated, and the people every where summoned to arms

By pulpit drum ecclesiastic,
Beat with fist instead of a stick,

must be fresh in the recollection of my readers.

The men who, in the garb of clergymen, bustle at electioneering meetings, forsooth, are not really such, but merely assume the disguise of that holy order, since it would be uncandid to suppose they can so universally lose sight of what is befitting ministers of the gospel. The venerable bench of bishops, who sit in the House of Lords, either attend in silent pomp, without taking any part in the deliberations, or they violate the character of ministers of the gospel. We must have been grossly imposed upon by the public prints, which informed us of the clergy of a whole archdeaconry, or diocese, meeting to petition parliament against the catholic claims, since they could never, with one consent, depart so far from the decorum of ministers of the gospel!

The plain state of the case is, not that the writer is offended at my meddling with politics, but that I have meddled on the wrong side. Had the same mediocrity of talent been exerted in eulogizing the measures of ministers, his greetings would have been as loud as his invective is bitter. But it was exerted to expose public abuses, to urge the necessity of reform, and lay open the tergiversation of the heaven-born minister, and Sunday duellist, who, after devoting the day of rest to deeds of blood, has, by a strange fatality, obtained a sort of political beatification. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

Another head of accusation is, that I have censured the character of Bishop Horsley, whose character, the Reviewer tells us, "is far removed beyond my attack, while I have eulogized Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, Socinians." To this it is sufficient to reply, that Dr. Price was *not* a Socinian, but an Arian; he wrote professedly in confutation of socinianism; and though I disapprove of his religious principles, I feel no hesitation in affirming, in spite of the frantic and unprincipled abuse of Burke, that a more ardent and enlightened friend of his country never lived, than that venerable patriarch of

freedom. Such were the sentiments of the worshipful corporation of London, who in token of their esteem presented him with the freedom of the city in a golden box; such was the judgement of Mr. Pitt, who long professed himself his admirer, and condescended to seek his advice on questions of finance. Dr. Priestley, it is acknowledged, was a Socinian; but it was not under that character that he was eulogized. It was as the friend of liberty, the victim of intolerance, and the author of some of the most brilliant philosophical discoveries of modern times, for which he was celebrated throughout Europe, and his name enrolled as a member of the most illustrious institutions; so that my eulogy was but a mere feeble echo of the applause which resounded from every civilized portion of the globe. And are we suddenly fallen back into the darkness and ignorance of the middle ages, during which the spell of a stupid and unfeeling uniformity bound the nations in iron slumbers, that it has become a crime to praise a man for talents which the whole world admired, and for virtues which his enemies confessed, merely because his religious creed was erroneous? If any thing could sink orthodoxy into contempt, it would be its association with such gothic barbarity of sentiment, such reptile meanness. What renders the wretched bigotry of the Reviewer the more conspicuous, is, that the eulogy in question was written almost immediately after the Birmingham riots, that disgraceful ebullition of popular phrenzy, during which a ferocious mob tracked his steps like bloodhounds, demolished his house, destroyed his library and apparatus, and, advancing from thence to the destruction of private and public buildings, filled the whole town and vicinity with terror and dismay.

What sort of a *Christian Guardian* the Reviewer would have proved on that occasion, may be easily inferred from his passing over these atrocities in silence, while he discharges his malice on their unoffending victim.

The maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, admits of exceptions; and as I am vilified for censuring Bishop Horsley, whose character, it is affirmed, "is far removed beyond my attack," while I praised Priestley, the Socinian, justice compels me to remark (what the Reviewer probably knows well enough) that in the virtues of private life, Dr. Priestley was as much superior to his antagonist, as he was inferior in the correctness of his speculative theology.

From the principles avowed in the *Apology*, this writer asserts, that it is evident I am to be classed to all intents and purposes with *radical reformers*. This charge is grounded on my recommendation of annual parliaments and universal suffrage. Now he either knows that Mr. Pitt, in conjunction with the Duke of Richmond, presided at public meetings, in which annual parliaments and the extension of the right of suffrage to all householders were recommended, or he does not. If he pleads ignorance of the fact, what presumption is it for a man so uninformed to write upon the subject! If he knows it, let me ask, was Mr. Pitt a *radical reformer* at the time he recommended those measures? If he was, I plead guilty to the charge; but if he was *not*, the recommendation of a similar plan is no evidence of my being a *radical*. For my own part, I feel the utmost contempt of the charge of radicalism. A radical reformer, if we attend to the import of words, is one that goes to the *root* of the evil, that proposes not merely to palliate, but to extirpate it. And what is that reform worth, that proposes less? He who labours under an inveterate malady, wishes for a *radical* cure: he would put little value on a remedy that should mitigate the pain, without reaching the source of the disorder. If the appellation of *radical reformer* is intended to denote a revolutionist, it is most absurdly applied to the advocate of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, because the first of these measures is merely a revival of the ancient practice, and the latter most consonant to the genius of a free constitution, which presupposes the extension of the elective franchise to all who can be presumed to have a will of their own: the exercise of this right, coupled with the

practice of voting by ballot, would, in my humble opinion, be the best expedient for securing the freedom and tranquillity of elections. Be this as it may, a sincere proposal of *reform* must differ essentially from the proposal of a revolution. If, by styling me a *radical* reformer, this writer intends to impute revolutionary views, I say it is a calumny and a falsehood; and I challenge him to produce a single sentence from my publications which sustains such a charge, or which convicts me of hostility to the existing order of things, as consisting of King, Lords, and Commons. But if he means, that I am for such a reform as will cut up corruption by the roots, I feel no inclination to disavow it. He wishes, it is evident, to fix the impression that I am hostile to the regal branch of the constitution; but shrinks from making the assertion, and endeavours to convey the venom of his accusations through the subtle vehicle of a dark and ambiguous phraseology.

For what purpose, but that of exciting hatred and horror, he has thought fit to couple my name with the mention of Hone and Carlile, it is not easy to conjecture. The blasphemy of their publications is quite as disgusting to me as to himself; but I am at a loss to conceive the justness of that reasoning which would infer that no political corruption, however enormous, no maladministration, however flagrant, must be exposed to animadversion, until these men have ceased to exhale their impieties. Let this principle once be admitted, and we shall never want Hones and Carliles in abundance: to remove a shield so easily purchased, and so effectual in the protection of every abuse, might be deemed an infatuation.

"He (the author of the Apology) pleads," says the Reviewer, "for annual parliaments, for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the exclusion of the relatives of noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for the sovereignty of the people. In what part of the sacred volume," he adds, "he has discovered the least sanction for any one of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine." The fatuity of this remark baffles all description. For why may I not retort his own language, and say,—This author pleads for septennial parliaments, for limited suffrage, for the admission of the relatives of noblemen to the House of Commons, and for the support of ecclesiastical establishments; but in what part of the sacred volume he finds the least sanction for them, I am at a loss to imagine? But when did I plead for the publication of blasphemy, fettered or unfettered? To plead for the liberty of divulging speculative opinions is one thing, and to assert the right of uttering blasphemy is another. For blasphemy, which is the speaking contumeliously of God, is not a speculative error; it is an overt act; a crime which no state should tolerate. In relation to the question of ecclesiastical establishments, since I am challenged to produce any passage from Scripture which sanctions my opposition to them, I beg leave to refer him to our Lord's declaration: *Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* That *national* churches, or exclusive establishments of religion by the civil magistrate, are one of these plants, will not be denied; since nothing of that kind, it is universally allowed, existed during the three first and purest ages of christianity, and not being authorised by the *great* Head of the church, it must, if we believe him, be rooted up. I have used the term *great* Head of the church, by way of distinction from that *little* head* which the church of England has invented, and on which, whether it be a beauty or a deformity in the body of Christ, the Scriptures are certainly as silent as on universal suffrage and annual parliaments.

It may not be improper in this place to notice a curious argument which the Reviewer adduces in support of his darling tenet of passive obedience and non-resist-

* A friend in conversation with Mr. Hall asked him whether, on cool meditation, he did not consider this allusion to the "little head" as a breach of taste? "Why (said he) I must confess it was better for a joke in the parlour, than to appear in print; but I never expected it would go beyond the columns of a newspaper."

ance, from the prevailing and inherent depravity of human nature. He reminds us that mankind are represented in scripture as "alike depraved and unruly;" and, from these premises, attempts to enforce that interpretation of scripture which would annihilate the liberties of mankind, and reduce them, without "restriction or reservation," to a passive submission to their political superiors. On another occasion I have sufficiently rescued the sentiments of the inspired writers from such a detestable imputation, by showing that their design is merely to inculcate the general duty of obedience to government, as the ordinance of God, while they leave the just bounds of authority, and the limits of obedience, to the regulation and adjustment of reason and experience; a task to which they are perfectly adequate. But how does the depravity of human nature evince the necessity of passive obedience and non-resistance, unless it is contended that the ruling part of mankind are *not* depraved? That mankind are naturally "depraved and unruly," affords a good argument for the existence of *Government itself;* but since they are "*alike* depraved and unruly," since governors partake of the same corruption as the people, aggravated too often by the possession of power, which inflames the passions and corrupts the heart, to allege the depravity of human nature as a reason for submission to arbitrary power, involves the absurdity of supposing that the cure of one degree of wickedness is to be obtained by affording an unlimited license to a greater. Retrace the annals of all times and nations, and you will find in the triumph of despotism the triumph of wickedness; you will find that men have been virtuous, noble, and disinterested, just in proportion as they have been free.

The Reviewer affects to triumph over me, on account of the supposed failure of the prediction, that ruin would speedily ensue, unless prevented by Reform. "Has this dreadful alternative," he asks, "fallen upon us? The present comparatively prosperous and improving circumstances of the kingdom answers, No. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better* and not *worse*

than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage."

I am at a loss to reply in suitable terms to a writer who seems to glory in setting truth at defiance. Let me ask the reader, whether he thinks there is a single person to be found in the nation, who really believes our condition as a people is improved within the last thirty years? Where is this improvement to be found? Is it in the augmentation of the national debt to three times its former amount: in the accumulated weight of taxes; in the increase of the poor rates; in the depression of land to less than one-half of its former value; in the ruin of the agricultural interest, in the thousands and tens of thousands of farmers who are distrained for rent, and they and their families reduced to beggary? Has this writer already forgotten the recent distress of the manufacturing class, who, from failure of employment, and the depression of wages, were plunged into despair, while numbers of them quitted their homes, and sought a precarious and scanty relief, by dragging through the country loaded wagons and carts, like beasts of burden? Is it in the rapid and portentous multiplication of crimes, by which our prisons are glutted with malefactors? If these are indications of increasing prosperity, we may justly adopt the language of the liturgy, from such prosperity "Good Lord, deliver us."

To do the writer justice, he has the grace to admit something like an exception respecting the agricultural interest, though he expresses himself with the diffidence becoming the solution of so difficult a problem. "If any exception," he says, "can be found, it is in the agricultural interest;" but he adds, "If those are to be believed *who ought to be judges*, this is to be ascribed to the want of legal protection." Now, two corn-bills have been passed of late years for the express protection of the agriculturist; the last of these in open contempt of the sentiments and wishes of the people. Previously to the passing of these bills, agriculture was in a comparatively flourishing state; since these laws were enacted it has experienced a depression beyond all

example; and, in the face of these facts, this writer has the assurance to inform us, that in the opinion of those *who ought to be judges*, the evil is wholly to be ascribed to the *want* of legal protection. But who are these highly privileged mortals, who are to be implicitly believed, because, "they ought to be judges?" If there is any class of persons whose opinion on these questions is entitled to deference and respect, they are undoubtedly political economists, men who have made the sources of national wealth the principal subject of their inquiry: and where will he find one, from Adam Smith to the present time, who has not reprobated the interference of legislature with the price of corn? To say nothing of the reasoning of that great philosopher, which is unanswerable, common sense will teach us, that laws to raise the price of produce, are unjust and oppressive taxes upon the whole community, for the exclusive benefit of a part. There is a description of men who are accustomed systematically, to yield up their understandings to others, who in their view "ought to be judges:" it is needless to add, that the present writer is evidently of this *servum pecus*, this tame and passive herd: and that his knowledge of the subject is just what might be expected from one who thinks by proxy. These men, forgetting, or affecting to forget, that the exercise of power, in whatever hands it is placed, will infallibly degenerate into tyranny, unless it is carefully watched, make it their whole business to screen its abuses; to suppress inquiry, stifle complaint, and inculcate on the people, as their duty, a quiet and implicit submission to the direction of those who, to speak in the vocabulary of slaves, "ought to be judges." These are the men by whom the constitution is endangered; these the maxims by which free states are enslaved. If that freedom which is the birth-right of Britons is destined to go down to succeeding generations, it must result from the prevalence of an opposite spirit; a lofty enthusiasm, an ardent attachment to liberty, and an incessant jealousy of the tendency of power to enlarge its pretensions and extend its encroachments.

The Reviewer asserts, that "my whole pamphlet is "an argument in favour of the supremacy and infallibility "of the people, and of the necessity of paying an "implicit obedience to the least expression of their "will."

This, I must assure the reader, is a gross and wilful misrepresentation. In no part of the pamphlet have I pleaded for any such doctrine. All that I have asserted is, that in proportion as the *House of Commons* is in unison with the people, animated by the same sympathies, and affected by the same interests, in the same proportion will it accomplish the design of its functions as a *representative* assembly; and that a reform is absolutely necessary, in order to restore it to that conjunction of interests and of feelings on which its utility, as the popular branch of the legislature, depends. The necessity of such an union between the people and their representatives, is manifest from the very meaning of the terms, for it were quite needless for them to be at the pains of choosing men, who, in consequence of a foreign bias, are prepared to contradict their sentiments, and neglect their interests. A House of Commons which should chiefly consist of court sycophants and tyrants, would exhibit nothing more than the mockery of representation. By artfully transferring what I have said of *one* branch of the legislature to the *whole*, and presenting even that in an exaggerated form, he has represented me as reducing the government to such an immediate and incessant dependence on the popular will, as never entered my thoughts, and would be utterly incompatible with the genius of a limited monarchy.

Having already trespassed on the patience of my readers, I shall close with one remark on the eulogium pronounced by the Reviewer on the character of the late Mr. Pitt. He appears to be extremely shocked with the freedom and severity of my strictures on his conduct, as implying, "a forgetfulness of his singular disinterestedness, and his perfect devotion to his country." As this has become a favourite topic with the admirers of that celebrated minister, it is necessary to remind

them, that there are other vices besides the love of money, and other virtues besides that of dying poor. It may be easily admitted, that the ambition which grasps at the direction of an empire, and the pitiful passion for accumulation, were not the inmates of the same bosom. In minds of a superior order, ambition, like Aaron's rod, is quite sufficient to swallow up the whole fry of petty propensities. Far be it from me to wish to withhold an atom of the praise justly due to him. That he devoted much time, and a considerable portion of talent, to the affairs of his country, is undeniable. The evils which he has brought upon us were not the production of an ordinary mind, nor the work of a day, nor done in sport; but what I contend for is, that, to say nothing of his unparalleled apostasy, his devotion to his country, and what was worse, its devotion to him, have been the source of more calamity to this nation than any other event that has befallen it; and that the memory of Pitt will be identified in the recollection of posterity with accumulated taxes, augmented debt, extended pauperism, a debasement and prostration of the public mind, and a system of policy not only hostile to the cause of liberty at home, but prompt and eager to detect and tread out every spark of liberty in Europe; in a word, with all those images of terror and destruction, which the name imports. The enthusiasm with which his character is regarded by a numerous class of his countrymen, will be ascribed, by a distant age, to that mysterious infatuation which, in the inscrutable counsels of Heaven, is the usual, the destined, precursor of the fall of states.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

ROBERT HALL.

LEICESTER, *Feb.* 5, 1822.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

SOME excellent persons, who did not know Mr. HALL, often express great concern that so good a man should have suffered his thoughts to be so much engrossed in politics, as they suppose must have been the case. The truth, however, is, that few men gave themselves less to political matters than he did. At the deeply interesting period in which he wrote his political tracts, the whole world was absorbed in the contemplation of political events, and the discussion of political principles. Among the disputants of the two great parties into which this country was divided, clergymen and other ministers took a most active part, and the class denominated Evangelical were by no means the least active. Some of the most eminent of them, indeed, engaged in that sad and then frequent profanation of holy places and things, the consecration of the colours of a volunteer corps in a parish church; and one even put on a military cockade, in order to incite his parishioners to come forward in the public cause. The genuine principles of our admirable constitution were thought by many to be in imminent peril; yet all who wrote in their defence were exposed to obloquy. A learned prelate asserted, in the House of Lords, that "the people had nothing to do with "the laws but to obey them," and his sentiment was loudly applauded. In a kindred spirit, during the trials of Muir and Palmer, for "leasing-making," or sedition, in Scotland, one of the Lords of Justiciary declared that "*no man had* "*a right to speak of the Constitution unless he possessed* "*landed property;*" and another affirmed that, "*since the* "*abolition of* TORTURE, *there was no adequate punishment for* "*sedition.*" In such a season of violent excitement, when upright men of every shade of opinion thought the most valuable principles at stake, no wonder that heats and animosities prevailed, and that all expressed themselves

with vehemence, — often with acerbity. Mr. Hall, then under thirty years of age, was of too ardent and generous a spirit to be quiescent in that signal crisis of public affairs. He discharged what, in the exigency, appeared to him an imperious duty, and then remained silent, until, after an interval of many years, at the intreaty of his friends, he broke the silence in a brief effort of self-defence against anonymous misrepresentation. It was, indeed, his permanent conviction (see vol. V. p. 33.) "that the teachers of religion 'are called to a nobler occupation, than to subserve the "interests of party, or fan the flames of public dissension." Nay, for some years, so great was his indifference to political concerns, that he scarcely ever read a newspaper, or did more in conversation than advert for a moment, if at all, to public measures. His political principles, however, remained the same through life; with those simple modifications which the lapse of time and the occurrence of new events, were calculated to produce in the breast of a considerate man. Though he thought them important, he uniformly regarded them as subordinate to others. He cherished with delight the anticipations of a new and better order of things amongst mankind; but he looked mainly for the realizing of his hopes to the operation of a higher class of principles than the politics of this world can supply, —principles of heavenly origin, which, flowing from religious Truth, and acting at once upon the spiritual part of our nature, change and improve the mass of society by transforming the characters of the men who compose it.

Some of the following pieces yield ample proofs of the prevalence of these sentiments.

That there are occasions on which pious men not only may, but must, if they act fully on scriptural principles, censure public men, and public measures, has been clearly shown by one of the gentlest as well as most excellent of men—Granville Sharpe—in his Essay on "*The Law of Passive Obedience.*"

AN ADDRESS

TO THE PUBLIC,

ON AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT CONNECTED WITH

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER

OF THE

EAST INDIA COMPANY.

[Published in 1813.]

AN ADDRESS.

As the subject of the renewal of the charter of the East India Company is shortly to come before parliament, with a view to a final decison, it is presumed that it will not be deemed impertinent to invite the attention of the legislature to a particular connected with that subject, which is judged of high importance. The point to which we refer, respects the propriety of inserting a clause in the new charter, authorizing the peaceable disseminating of christian principles in India.*. For

* The object for which Mr. Hall, and many other pious men, so earnestly pleaded, was accomplished, at least as to its practical results: though there is still room to interpose obstructions, if men in power should be inclined to present them. The act which passed in 1813, "for continuing in the East India Company for a farther term the possession of the British territories in India," contains four clauses (viz. 33, 34, 35, 36) which relate to "persons desirous of going to "India for the purpose of promoting the religious and moral improvement of the natives." The nature of this part of the enactment will be understood from the subjoined brief official abstract:—

"If the Court of Directors think fit to refuse the applications for "permission made in behalf of such persons, they are to transmit the "applications to the Board of Commissioners, who, if they see no valid "objection to granting the permission, may authorize the said persons to "proceed to any of the Company's principal settlements, provided with a "certificate of sanction from the Directors. The Court of Directors, "however, may make representations concerning such persons to the "Board of Commissioners: and those persons on arriving in the "East Indies are to be subject to the regulations of the local governments. Further, the governments in India may declare the certificates "and licences of such persons to be void, if they shall appear by their "conduct to have forfeited their claims to protection."

Besides these clauses, there are others, from 49 to 54 inclusive, which relate to a "church establishment in India. A bishop and "three archdeacons to be appointed; their salaries are specified;

want of such a provision, the missionaries who have lately visited that country, have been under the necessity of going there by the circuitous route of America, besides meeting with considerable obstructions in their attempts to settle, and being exposed to much vexation and interruption in their quiet efforts to plant the christian faith. It must surely be considered as an extraordinary fact, that in a country under the government of a people professing christianity, *that* religion should be the only one that is discountenanced and suppressed.

That the most complete toleration should be extended to the various modes of belief prevailing in those remote dependencies of our empire, and that none of the inhabitants should be subjected to the slightest inconvenience on account of their adherence to the religious system of their forefathers, is readily admitted; nor would any event give more serious concern to the writer of this address, than an interference with that right of private judgment which he deems an inalienable prerogative of human nature. But, for a christian nation to give a decided preference to polytheism and idolatry, by prohibiting the dissemination of a purer faith, and thus employ its powers in suppressing the truth, and prolonging the existence of the most degrading and deplorable superstitions, is a line of conduct equally repugnant to the dictates of religion, and the maxims of sound policy. To oppose by force the propagation of revealed truth, from any worldly considerations whatever, is such a sacrifice of right to expediency, as can be justified on no principles but what will lead to the subversion of all morality and religion.

If christianity be a communication from heaven, to oppose its extension is *to fight against God;* an impiety which, under every possible combination of circumstances, must expect a severe rebuke; but the guilt of which is

"the episcopal jurisdiction is to be limited by letters patent from the "the king; pensions to be allowed after fifteen years' service." Of the bishops who have been appointed since the passing of this act, four, viz. *Middleton*, *Heber*, *James*, and *Turner*, have been already brought by the climate of India to a premature grave.—Ed.

inconceivably aggravated, when the opposition proceeds from the professors of that very religion. We have no example in the history of the world of such a conduct; we have no precedent of a people prohibiting the propagation of their own faith; a species of intolerance exposed not only to the objections which lie in common against all restraints upon conscience, but to a train of absurdities peculiar to itself; at the same time that it imposes a character of meanness on the ruling powers, by the virtual confession it includes, that they have either no religion, or a religion of which they are ashamed. As the equality of all religions, the distinguishing tenet of deism, is alike repugnant to the dictates of reason and the oracles of truth, so it is ill calculated to conciliate the esteem of eastern nations, on whom it can have no other effect than to desecrate the British name, by depriving it of the veneration which nature, unsophisticated by impiety, has inseparably connected with sentiments of religious belief. Powerfully impressed as they are with religious principles and prejudices, however erroneous, we can scarcely adopt a more effectual expedient for securing their contempt and abhorrence than an avowed indifference to whatever concerns that momentous subject.

It is an undeniable fact, that no persons have been so popular in India, as the men who have exerted themselves with the most steady and persevering zeal in the dissemination of christian principles; of which we have a striking example in the excellent Schwartz, for many years a missionary on the coast of Coromandel, who, by his wise and benevolent conduct, rendered, on various occasions, the most essential service to the British interests, and became the object of the enthusiastic attachment of the natives.*

The attempt to propagate christianity in India is not a new experiment; it has been now tried for more than a century: it received the warmest support of George

* See the Reports of the Society at Bartlett's Buildings, (now Lincoln's Inn Fields,) for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

the First, of illustrious memory, as well as of the then Archbishop of Canterbury; and in the hands of Ziegenbalgius and his successors, was crowned with distinguished success.* Similar attempts have been more recently made in Bengal, and the adjacent provinces; and several christian societies have been planted by the labours of missionaries in those parts of India. It deserves particular attention that no inconvenience, not even the slightest, has arisen from these enterprises; and that whatever agitation has been witnessed among the natives at different times, the propagation of christianity has never been the cause, or even the pretext. When intelligence of the insurrection of Vellore reached England, there were not wanting persons who endeavoured to ascribe it to the jealousy and uneasiness excited by the efforts of missionaries; but no attempt could be more unsuccessful, since, in the course of a most accurate investigation of the circumstances connected with that event, we have it, on the authority of Lord Teignmouth, that not even the name of a missionary was mentioned. It arose from causes totally distinct. Thus have we the experience of more than a century to justify the conclusion, that nothing is to be feared for the tranquillity of India from the operations of missionaries, subject, as they must ever be, to the control of the constituted authorities.

The number of natives who profess christianity is not small nor inconsiderable. The disciples of Schwartz and his successors on the eastern side of the peninsula amount to fifty thousand; and the Syrian christians, on the coast of Malabar, to several hundred thousands; the greater part of them converted from the Bramins, and the higher classes. They have subsisted there from the fifth century, are in possession of one hundred and nineteen churches, some of them sumptuous and splendid edifices; and their superior elevation of character, and purity of manners are attested, on the most respectable

* See the excellent Letters from his Majesty and the Archbishop, addressed to Ziegenbalgius, in Buchanan's Ecclesiastical Researches.

authority, to be such as the possession of the christian faith might be expected to inspire.* In addition to this, translations of the New Testament, in almost all the vernacular dialects of India, have been recently circulated, and a considerable number of the natives are assiduously and constantly employed in preaching the gospel; so that it is too late to think of checking its career: the possession it has taken of the public mind will necessarily render all such attempts impracticable. The only question which remains to be decided is, whether its further propagation shall be left solely in the hands of natives, or whether intelligent and respectable Europeans who come more immediately into contact with the British Government, and in whose prudence and experience greater confidence may be reposed, shall be allowed to superintend its movements. The good seed having struck its root too deep ever to be extirpated, the only alternative is, either to leave it to its spontaneous growth, aided by the labour of Hindoos, or to place it under a more skilful and enlightened cultivation.

Though strangers to the theory, the inhabitants of Hindostan have been long familiarized to the practice of toleration. In no part of the world is there a greater variety of sects, or more contrariety in the modes of religious belief, subsisting without the slightest disturbance; even the grand division of the natives into Hindoos and Mahometans has continued for ages, without interruption to the public harmony.

But if nothing is to be feared from the dissemination of christian principles in India, the advantages resulting from it, whether we consult the interest of the natives, or our own, are too obvious to require to be enumerated, and too important to be overlooked. With respect to its aspect on the natives, will it be contended that a more powerful instrument can be devised for meliorating and raising their character, than grafting upon it the principles of our holy religion, which, wherever it prevails,

* See the interesting narrative of Dr. Buchanan's visit to the Syrian christians, in his Ecclesiastical Researches.

never fails to perfect whatever is good, and to correct whatever is evil, in the human constitution, and to which Europe is chiefly indebted for those enlightened views, and that high sense of probity and honour, which distinguish it so advantageously in a comparison with Asiatic nations? The prevalence of christianity every where marks the boundary which separates the civilized from the barbarous or semi-barbarous parts of the world; let but this boundary be extended, and the country included within its limits may be considered as redeemed from the waste, and prepared to receive the precious seeds of civilization and improvement. Independently of eternal prospects, it may be safely affirmed that polytheism and idolatry draw after them such a train of absurd and dismal consequences, as to be quite incompatible with the due expansion of the human intellect, and necessarily to prevent the operations of reason from reaching their maturity and perfection. Wherever christianity prevails, mankind are uniformly progressive; it communicates that just manner of thinking upon the most important subjects, which, extending its influence thence to every department of speculative and moral truth, inspires a freedom of inquiry, and an elevation of sentiment, which raise the disciples of revelation immeasurably above the level of unassisted nature.

The Hindoo superstition is characterized by a puerile extravagance of conception, as hostile to the cultivation of reason, as the enormity of its practices is revolting to humanity. It oppresses the former by its gigantic absurdities; it extinguishes the latter by the cruelty of its rites. The annual destruction of female infants in Guzerat and Kutch is estimated at fifteen or twenty thousand.* Till lately, it had been the custom, from time immemorial, to immolate at the island of Saugor, and at other places esteemed holy, on the banks of the Ganges, human victims, or to destroy them by sharks. From a late investigation, it appears that the number of women who sacrifice themselves on the funeral pile of

* See Moore's Hindoo Infanticide.

their husbands, within thirty miles of Calcutta, is, on an average, upwards of two hundred annually.* A multitude of courtezans are uniformly attached to the principal temples, and the most obscene symbols exhibited to inflame the passions of their votaries.†

While the history of all times and nations evinces the inseparable alliance of impurity and cruelty with the worship of idols, is it consistent with the dictates of humanity, not merely to witness these enormities without attempting to correct them, but to oppose the communication of the only remedy which is capable of effecting a cure?

The base venality, together with the spirit of artifice and intrigue, which distinguishes the natives of Hindostan, have rendered it the theatre of perpetual revolutions, robbed its native governments of every principle of stability, and rendered poisonings, assassinations, and treachery, expedients so constantly resorted to by the parties in conflict, that it is impossible to peruse its history without shuddering. To affirm that there is nothing in their superstitions calculated to correct these vices, is saying little, when, in fact, they derive a powerful sanction from the maxims of their religion, and from the character of their gods. There is not one of their deities portrayed in their Shasters whose moral character is tolerably correct. How much christianity is wanted to exalt the sentiments, and purify the principles, of this corrupt and effeminate race, is too obvious to need to be insisted on.

That their conversion is practicable, is ascertained beyond controversy by the success which has already attended the experiment; that no apprehensions are to be entertained for the permanence of British power, in consequence of the attempt, is manifest from experience; that to consult the welfare of the subject is the first duty of the sovereign, and the chief distinction betwixt the

* See Buchanan's Memoir, p. 96, Appendix. In a letter lately received from Dr. Carey, he estimates the whole number of women annually sacrificed throughout India at ten thousand.

† See Sonerat's Voyage aux Indes et à la Chine, p. 219.

exercise of legitimate authority and the operation of lawless tyranny, will not be disputed in an enlightened age; and that the christian religion is the greatest blessing we have received, the most precious boon we can bestow, none but infidels will deny. It surely will not be asserted, that we are under less obligation to communicate a good, because that good may be traced to the immediate interposition of Heaven, or because it contains the seed and germ of eternal felicity. He who believes the Bible, must know that the heathen are to be given to Christ for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; and that therefore to *forbid his being preached to the Gentiles that they may be saved*, is an attempt to contravene the purposes of the Most High, equally impotent and presumptuous. *Let the potsherds strive against the potsherds of the earth, but woe unto him who striveth with his Maker.* Such conduct, persevered in, must infallibly draw down the judgements of God on the people to whose infatuated counsels it is to be ascribed. Whoever considers the aspect of the times, must be invincibly prejudiced not to discern the symptoms of a peculiar crisis, the distinguishing features of which are, the rapid subversion of human institutions, and the advancement of the kingdom of God. *The stone cut out without hands has already fallen upon the image, and made it like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor:* the next event we are to look for in the order of Providence, is its enlarging itself, *till it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth.* If there ever was a period when the propagation of the true religion might be resisted with impunity, that period is past; and the Master of the universe is now addressing the greatest potentates in the language of an ancient oracle:—*Be wise now, ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.* Encompassed as we are with the awful tokens of a presiding and avenging Providence, dissolving the fabrics of human wisdom, extinguishing the most ancient dynasties, and tearing up kingdoms by their roots, it would be the height of infatuation any longer to oppose the reign of God, whose purposes will pursue their career, in spite of

the efforts of human policy, which must either yield their cooperation, or be broken by its force.

All that is desired, on this occasion, is simply that the Word of God may be permitted to have free course. Whether it be consistent with sound policy for the British government to employ any part of its resources in aid of the cause of christianity in India, is a question which it is not necessary to discuss, while its friends confine their views to a simple toleration, and request merely that its teachers may not be harassed or impeded in their attempts to communicate instruction to the natives. Before such a liberty can be withheld, the principles of toleration must be abandoned; nor will it be practicable to withhold it without exciting a sanguinary persecution, where men are to be found who will eagerly embrace the crown of martyrdom, rather than relinquish the performance of what appears to them a high and awful duty. And what a spectacle will it exhibit, for a christian government to employ force in the *support* of idolatry, and the *suppression* of truth!

Instead of dwelling on the necessary effects of such a measure, let us consider for a moment the beneficial consequences likely to result from an opposite mode of conduct. On that improvement of character which the cordial reception of revealed truth cannot fail to operate, it will be easy to graft some of the best habits and institutions of European nations, advancing gradually through an interminable series of social order and happiness. Under the fostering hand of religion, reason will develope her resources, and philosophy mature her fruits. Nor will the advantages accruing to the British interests, from a change so salutary, be less certain, or less important. The possession of the same faith will occasion such an approximation of the habits and sentiments of the natives to our own, as will render the union firm, by rendering it cordial. While a total opposition in their views on the most important points subsists betwixt the sovereign and the subjects;—while objects adored by the one are held in contempt and

abhorrence by the other; they may be artificially connected, but it is impossible they should be united: it is rather a juxta-position of inanimate parts, than a union of minds. In such a situation the social tie wants that cementing principle which is requisite to give it strength and stability: it is a strained and unnatural position, in which things are held contrary to their native bent; in which authority is upheld merely by force, without deriving support from that sympathy of congenial sentiment which forms its truest basis. Hence the precarious tenure by which European states have successively held dominion in India, where all has been submitted to the arbitration of the sword; where the moment force has been withdrawn or relaxed, authority has ceased, and each, in its turn, has gained a transient ascendancy, none a firm and tranquil possession.

In order to obviate the mischiefs arising from such a state of things, it is extremely desirable, providing it be practicable, to impart to our subjects in the East some principle which shall draw them into closer contact with the ruling power; and what principle equally operative and efficient with the possession of a common religion? Though the universal diffusion of christianity over India will probably be a work of time, its influence in strengthening the social compact, by augmenting the attachment of the natives, will be uniformly progressive; and while external tranquillity is secured, by the superiority of our policy and our arms, we shall every year be making our way into their hearts: we shall be establishing an interior dominion, and may confidently reckon on the unshaken fidelity of every christian convert. This is not mere conjecture: for in all the trying vicissitudes experienced by the British interests in India, the Hindoo christians have invariably approved themselves our firmest friends and abettors.

Though the writer of this address is afraid of being tedious, there is another consideration connected with the present subject, which he deems of too much importance not to be mentioned. The possession of India, it is well known, is an object to which our enemies are

looking with eager desire, accompanied with jealousy at that splendour which the vastness of our oriental empire confers on the British name and character. No efforts will they deem too great, no sacrifices too expensive, to rob us of so bright a jewel. What events may arise hereafter to facilitate the accomplishment of their wishes, it is beyond the power of human sagacity to conjecture: one thing is certain, that nothing will oppose a more formidable obstacle to their designs than the diffusion of christianity. They who have received that inestimable blessing, will infallibly cling with ardour to the people to whom they are indebted for it. They will feel more than a natural affection to the country which has opened to them the prospect of immortality, and nourished them with the bread of life. In all the struggles to retain or to acquire dominion in the East, the christian portion of the population will, to a man, be the zealous partizans of Great Britain; a firm and immoveable band, whose devoted attachment will in some measure compensate for their inferiority of number. In this species of policy, too, in this most unexceptionable mode of conciliating esteem, we shall have nothing to apprehend from the intrigues of our rivals, who are equally indisposed and disqualified to engage in such an enterprise.

If we consider what may be the probable intention of Providence in opening so extensive a communication betwixt Europe and the most ancient seats of idolatry, and more especially of subjecting such immense territories in the East to the British arms, we can conceive no end more worthy of the Deity in these momentous changes, than to facilitate the propagation of true religion.

Our acquisition of power there has been so rapid, so extensive, and so disproportioned to the limits of our native empire, that there are few events in which the interposition of Providence may be more distinctly traced. From the possession of a few forts in different parts of the coast, which we were permitted to erect for the protection of our commerce, we have risen, in the course of less than half a century, to a summit of power, whence we exert a direct dominion over fifty millions, and a

paramount influence over a hundred millions of men. By an astonishing train of events, a large portion of the population of the oriental world has been subjected to the control of an island placed in the extremities of the west of Europe. Kingdoms have fallen after kingdoms, and provinces after provinces, with a rapidity which resembles the incidents of a romance, rather than the accustomed order of political events. It is remarkable, too, that this career of conquest has uniformly directed its steps towards those parts of the earth, and to those only, which are the primeval seats of pagan idolatry; forming an intimate connexion betwixt the most enlightened of christian nations, and the victims of the most inveterate and deplorable system of superstition mankind have ever witnessed. As we must be blind not to discern the finger of God in these transactions, it behoves us to consider for what purposes we are lifted to so high a pre-eminence.

It is certainly not to be ascribed to a blind predilection, which aims at no other object than to gratify ambition, by extending the power, and augmenting the grandeur of Great Britain; a motive too puerile to satisfy the requisitions of human reason, much more to limit the views of an eternal mind.

The possession of sovereignty over extensive kingdoms is a sacred trust, for which nations are not less responsible than individuals, a delegation from the supreme fountain of power; and as the unalterable laws of nature forbid us to confound men with things, or to forget the reciprocal obligations subsisting betwixt the sovereign and the subject, we can scarcely be guilty of a greater crime than to consider the latter as merely subservient to the interests of the former. Every individual of the immense population subjected to our sway, has claims on our justice and benevolence which we cannot with impunity neglect: the wants and sufferings of every individual utter a voice which goes to the heart of humanity. In return for their allegiance we owe them protection and instruction, together with every effort to meliorate their condition and improve their character. It is but

fair to acknowledge that we have not been wholly insensible to these claims, and that the extension of our power has been hitherto highly beneficial. But why, in the series of improvements, has christianity been neglected? Why has the communication of the greatest good we have to bestow been hitherto fettered and restrained; and while every modification of idolatry, not excepting the bloody and obscene orgies of Juggernaut, has received support, has every attempt to instruct the natives in the things which belong to their peace been suppressed? It will surely appear surprising to posterity, that a nation, glorying in the purity of its faith as its highest distinction, should suffer its transactions in the East to be characterized by a spirit of infidelity, as though it were imagined the foundations of empire could be laid only in apostasy and impiety; at a moment, too, when Europe, convulsed to its centre, beholds these frantic erections swept with the besom of destruction. Their astonishment will be the more excited, when they compare our conduct in this instance with the unprecedented exertions we are making for the diffusion of religious knowledge in other directions; with the operations of the Bible Society, which, formed for the sole purpose of conveying the oracles of God to all quarters, has risen to an importance that entitles it to be regarded as a national concern; in which statesmen, nobles, and prelates, have enrolled their names, emulous of the honour of advancing to the utmost the noble design of the institution; with the Bartlett's Buildings Society, employed for upwards of a century in attempts to convert the natives of Hindostan, which includes in the list of its members every bishop, and every dignified ecclesiastic in the realm; with the numerous translations going on in all the dialects of the East, to which the learned, both in Europe and in Asia, are looking with eager expectation. When posterity shall compare the conduct we are reprobating, with these facts, how great their astonishment to find the piety of the nation has suffered itself to lie prostrate at the feet of a few individuals, the open or disguised enemies of the faith of Jesus!

It is impossible, in connexion with the circumstances to which we have adverted, to mistake the real sentiments of the British people, or not to perceive that the illustrious associations already mentioned are entitled, on a question of this nature, to be considered as its genuine and legitimate organ.

It ought never to be forgotten, in the consideration of this subject, that it is inseparably connected with liberty of conscience. Religious toleration implies not merely the freedom of thought, which no human power can restrain, and which equally subsists under the most tyrannical and the most enlightened governments; it comprehends, also, the freedom of communication, and the right of discussion, within the limits of sober and dispassionate argument. He who is impressed with a conviction of the importance of the Christian verities, it is reasonable to suppose, will be anxious to communicate them: he will probably feel as St. Paul did in a similar situation, whose spirit was stirred within him when he beheld Athens wholly given up to idolatry: he may be touched with so strong a commiseration for the victims of religious imposture, and so powerful a sense of the duty of attempting to correct it, as to be ready to adopt the language employed on another occasion:—"We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

None but the determined enemy of truth and decency will deny that such a state of mind is possible, or that it is more allied to virtue than to vice. If, at this juncture, a superior power interposes, and says, You shall not impart your conviction, however strong; you shall not attempt to dispel delusions the most gross, or correct enormities the most flagrant, though no other means are thought of but calm expostulation and argument; in what, I would ask, does such an interference differ from persecution? Here is conscience on one side, an enlightened conscience, as all christians must confess, and force on the other; which is precisely the position in which things are placed by every instance of persecution. If christianity was ever persecuted; if the martyrologies of all times and nations are not to be exploded as mere fiction and romance; this is persecution, and persecution of a most portentous character, being directed, in support of a system we detest, against the religion by which we expect to be saved. Here are a people, indignant posterity will exclaim, who profess subjection to the Saviour of the world, and hold in their hands the oracles which foretell the universal extension of his dominion, who yet make it a crime to breathe his name in pagan lands, and employ their power to fence out the scene of his future triumphs, and render it, as far as possible, inaccessible to his religion. With what efficacious sincerity, and edifying fervour, must this people have prayed, "Thy kingdom come!" Admirable successors of the Constantines and the Charlemagnes of a former age! Faithful stewards of the manifold gifts of God!

When the parallel betwixt the conduct of modern missionaries and the first preachers of the gospel is insisted on, it is usual to attempt to annul the conclusion deduced from the comparison, by remarking that the latter were possessed of miraculous powers, to which the former have no pretensions. That this circumstance occasions a real disparity in the means of ensuring success, will be readily acknowledged; but that it makes any difference whatever in the right of imparting instruction, will not hastily be conceded. Had such supernatural interpositions never accompanied the publication of the gospel, it had wanted its credentials, and been essentially defective in the proof of its divine origination. It was necessary for a new dispensation, when first ushered into the world, to be accompanied with a direct appeal to the senses, with the visible signatures of a divine hand; and it is the glory of our holy religion to have possessed them in a variety and splendour that astonished mankind, and laid a foundation for the faith and obedience of all succeeding ages. At its *entrance*, such an economy was requisite to prepare the way. But when these miraculous occurrences, after enduring the severest scrutiny, under circumstances the most favourable to investigation, were committed to writing, and formed a compact body of external evidences; when the super-

natural origin of the christian faith had taken its place amongst the most indubitable of recorded facts, it was no longer necessary to be continually repeating the same proofs; nor consistent with the majesty of heaven to be ever laying the foundation afresh. It was time to assume the truth of religion as a thing proved.

As we were none of us eye-witnesses of the miracles wrought in the primitive ages, but rest our belief on historical documents, it is not impossible, as far as the truth of christianity is concerned, to lay open to pagans the sources of our conviction, and by that means to place them in nearly the same situation with ourselves; to say nothing of that internal evidence which *commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* This is actually the mode in which the light of Revelation has been chiefly diffused since the cessation of miraculous gifts; which, in the opinion of some, terminated with the apostles, in the judgement of others, were continued through the first three centuries, but are universally allowed to have ceased long before the conversion of the northern and western parts of Europe. Did the disciples of St. Columba, who spread christianity through the German provinces on the Baltic, through the kingdoms of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, owe their success to miraculous powers? Did St. Austin and his associates, who laid the foundations of the religious establishments in England, make such pretensions?

To demand miracles in order to justify the propagation of christianity in pagan countries, is to attribute to it a state of perpetual weakness and pupilage: it is to cancel all that is past, to accuse the most illustrious missionaries of enthusiasm, and the faith of our forefathers of folly and credulity. The principle we are attempting to expose, not content with inflicting a stigma on a particular sect or party, involves the whole christian community established in these realms, in the foul reproach of being the illegitimate offspring of fanaticism or imposture. It is only necessary for us to place ourselves in imagination at that period when the foundation of the church was laid in this and other European countries, to

perceive that the same objections which are made to the present efforts of missionaries, apply with equal force to those that are past. They who first exhibited the mystery of the cross to the view of our rude ancestors, were equally destitute of miraculous powers with ourselves. But they felt the power of the world to come; they were deeply impressed with the dignity and excellence of the christian dispensation, and touched with a passionate regard for the honour of God and the salvation of souls. These were the motives which impelled them forward; these the weapons of their warfare. The ridicule attempted to be poured on men of the same principles and character, engaged in the same object, is, in fact, reflected on these their predecessors, and is precisely a repetition of the conduct of the impenitent Jews, who honoured the memory and built the sepulchres of departed, while they were imbruing their hands in the blood of living prophets. We collect, with eager veneration, the names and achievements of the first heralds of the gospel; we dwell with exultation on the heroic fortitude they displayed in encountering the opposition of fierce barbarians, amidst their efforts to reclaim them from a sanguinary superstition, and to imbue their minds with the principles of an enlightened piety. We look up to them as to a superior order of beings, and in the character of the instructors of mankind in the sublimest lessons, entitled to a distinction above all Greek, above all Roman fame; yet, with ineffable absurdity, and a most contemptible littleness of mind, if it please Providence, at distant intervals, to raise up a few congenial spirits, we are prepared to treat them with levity and scorn. It is the misfortune of some men to labour under an incapacity of discerning living worth;—a sort of moral virtuosi, who form their estimate of characters, as the antiquarian of coins, by the rust of antiquity.

> "Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes
> Infra se positas: extinctus amabitur idem."—HORACE.

I would not be understood, in the remarks made on this part of the subject, to explode the expectation of

the renewal of miraculous agency; which some of the most able divines have unquestionably formed, from a perusal of the prophetic oracles. The inference I would wish to establish is simply this, that we are not justified in neglecting the means of propagating the truth we already possess, by the absence of higher succour; and that it would ill become the christian world to abandon the attempts to convert the inhabitants of pagan countries, in deference to the clamours of men, who demand miracles merely because they believe they will not be vouchsafed, and decry the ordinary methods of procedure, because they are within our reach, and have already been crowned with success. To such the language of the prophet Amos may be addressed with propriety:—*Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.*—Chap. v. 18.

AN

APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

THE FRAME-WORK KNITTERS' FUND.

[PUBLISHED IN 1819.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

Impressed as the writer of these pages has long been with the critical state of the stocking manufactory, and the intolerable evils resulting from a progressive depression of wages, he could not refrain from communicating his sentiments on this most interesting subject. He is aware of his inability to discuss it with that precision and force which superior talents might command. His only apology is, that he has *done what he could.* His reason for suppressing his name, is simply, that while it might possibly create prejudice in some quarters, he is not aware that it would bestow additional weight in any

AN APPEAL.

It is with the highest satisfaction I perceive that the wretched state of the labouring mechanics in Leicestershire has at length arrested the attention, and drawn forth the liberality of a discerning public. But while we rejoice to see such a feeling awakened, we must be permitted to express our surprise and concern at the very scanty and penurious contribution it has hitherto produced. After witnessing such an unexampled depression in the remuneration of labour as to place the means of subsistence totally out of the reach of the industrious poor, when the only alternative presented, is that of effective aid afforded by the more opulent, or the total ruin and extinction of the labouring classes, it was natural to expect that the extent and magnitude of the exertion would bear some proportion to the greatness of the object, and the exigence of the case. That this expectation is, as yet, far from being realized, requires no proof; nor will it be possible to prevent the recurrence of that intolerable state of suffering which we have recently witnessed, without more extensive and vigorous efforts.

It is frequently asserted, we are aware, that the rate of wages, like every other article, should be left to find its own level, and that all attempts at artificial regulation, either by voluntary association, or legal enactment, is repugnant to the true principles of political economy. That commerce ought to be left to its native operation, to a much greater extent than it is, we have learned from the highest authority; nor is it proposed to implore the interference of legislature in aid of our present object. But there is a peculiarity in the case of manual

labour to which we suspect the persons who urge this objection have not attended.

When the price of a particular commodity sinks so low as not to produce the ordinary profits of stock, a part or the whole of the capital is withdrawn; a less quantity is produced in proportion to the diminution of the demand, in consequence of which, the price rises to its former level. Thus the irregularity corrects itself, and little or no permanent mischief ensues. But the situation of the labourer is widely different; he has no other article to dispose of besides his personal industry and skill, on which he depends for his subsistence from day to day, nor can he, without being reduced to immediate distress, withhold them from the market, or even diminish their exertion to any considerable degree. The only commodity he has to part with is of such a nature, that it will not permit him to adjust the supply to the demand. He must instantly offer it to sale at whatever price it will fetch, or suffer all the agonies of want. Hence this is the kind of property of all others the most defenceless, and which most needs protection. That the rate of wages has a tendency to keep pace with the price of the necessaries of life is undeniable, but from the cause we have now mentioned it is long before that tendency becomes effective; the labourer and the mechanic are the *last* who experience the beneficial effect of an elevation in prices.

But, admitting the objection to which we have adverted to be more weighty than it is, where is the equity of urging it in opposition to the claims of the labouring classes, while it is treated with the utmost neglect on other occasions? What is the object, let me ask, of the laws for the regulation of trade, which form so large a part of our acts of parliament, but to secure to certain descriptions of the community a higher price for the respective commodities which they produce, and thus to direct the application of capital to a specific object? What is the design, the avowed object at least, of the corn bill, but to encourage agriculture, by securing a higher price for its productions than they could com-

mand, were they exposed to the effects of foreign competition? What is the design of the additional duty lately imposed on foreign wool, but to bestow an artificial elevation on the price of that article, as a means of promoting its domestic growth? and why so extensive a list of prohibitory statutes, except they are intended to encourage our home manufactures, by securing to them a higher price? Not to multiply words on so plain a subject, suffice it to remark that all laws and regulations of the legislature respecting trade and agriculture, with the exception of such as immediately relate to revenue, have for their immediate object the modification of price; it is by that means, and that alone, that they furnish encouragement to that species of productive industry, which it is deemed expedient to favour. Hence it is evident that the vaunted maxim of leaving every kind of production and labour to find its own level is not adhered to; that it has always been violated in this country, from the remotest times. An adherence to it would create a total revolution in our mercantile system, and while it is trampled under foot every day, it just commands a sufficient degree of theoretic assent, to render it, in the hands of the artful and designing, a *bugbear* to deter the humane from rendering effectual assistance to the distressed and laborious part of the community. But what, let me once more ask, what reason can be assigned for leaving this class unprotected, the most helpless in society, from the cause already specified, while the agricultural, the manufacturing, and the mercantile interests, are shielded, with jealous attention, by a multitude of legal provisions?

Why a philosophical theory, which is violated with impunity every moment, should then only be deemed sacred when it stands opposed to the claims of a starving and industrious population we are at a loss to conjecture. Let it be remembered, however, that an application to the legislature forms no part of the present plan; although, if every other expedient should fail, we see no reason why its aid should not be exerted in favour of the Leicestershire frame-work knitters, as well as of the

Spitalfields weavers, who were, a few years ago, effectually relieved by the establishment of a *minimum*,* with the entire approbation of the principal manufacturers. The excellent Mr. Wilberforce had a principal share in procuring that regulation; nor is it to be doubted, that, in conjunction with other humane and enlightened senators, he would be ready to exert, if necessary, the same efforts for the mitigation of similar distress.

The measure now intended is of a less bold and hazardous character. It is proposed simply by means of voluntary contribution to afford a subsistence, scanty it will probably be at the best, to that portion of the labouring class who are destitute of employment, that they may not be compelled to offer their labour for next to nothing, and thus reduce the general rate of wages to that scale of depression which has been already productive of such calamitous effects. On the present system, those who are thrown out of employment are tempted to offer their services for a remuneration totally inadequate to their wants. But a material inequality of wages for the same quantity of work is unnatural, and therefore cannot be permanent; the consequence is, that the wages of all the workmen are soon reduced to the rate at which the first hands are engaged. Thus a small surplus of labour, beyond what the state of the demand requires, becomes an engine for effecting a deep and universal depression; and the misery of a few, instead of exciting an effort for their relief, becomes the signal for a more extended infliction of the same calamity. To this evil no conceivable remedy, short of legislative interference, can be applied, except the creation of a fund capable of supplying the more pressing necessities of those whom the vicissitudes of trade may deprive of employment. This is the only expedient that furnishes the faintest prospect of giving permanence and stability to the statement to which the principal manufacturers have agreed; and on the vigour with which it is carried into effect depends our only chance of obviating the recurrence, with

* The *lowest* rate at which labour should be paid for.

fresh aggravation, of the distress we have lately witnessed.

The benefits resulting from the successful operation of the measure we are recommending will not be confined to its immediate objects, it will extend its influence to every class of the community; and the alleviation which it will afford to the almost insupportable burthen of the poor-rates will be of eminent advantage to the parishes. Suppose in a particular parish a hundred frames at work, and each of the frame-work knitters earns, clear of all deductions, ten shillings a week instead of six, that parish is benefited to the amount of a thousand pounds; and, considering the utter inadequacy of the former wages to procure the necessaries of life, the alteration will be nearly equivalent to an *annual* donation of a thousand pounds to the parochial treasure. That it is the interest of the manufacturing villages to exert themselves to the utmost in perpetuating the present statement, is an inference which must force itself on the attention of the most careless observer; and nothing but the most infatuated preference of the present to the future, can prevent them from giving to the fund a liberal support. Tradesmen of every description are deeply interested in the success of the present measure, since the permanent rise of wages will increase the power of purchase, and give a new impulse to every species of trade. Supposing the number engaged in all the various departments of the stocking manufactory to amount to thirty thousand, no extravagant computation, and little less than three hundred thousand pounds, in addition to the present sum, will annually find its way into the market; the agriculturist will find his account in the increased demand for raw produce, the manufacturer and the dealer, both wholesale and retail, in a more extended purchase of wrought goods. The landed proprietor will also be essentially benefited; for who does not know that the value of land must always bear a certain proportion to the demand for manufactures, and to the general diffusion of prosperity? Thus all orders will reap the advantage of a change of system.

On a subject so immediately connected with the claims of humanity, it is, surely, not too much to expect, that nothing more will be necessary to inspire an aversion to the system recently adopted, than a recollection of its actual effect in the ruin and prostration of the industrious mechanic. That man is little to be envied whose enjoyments are not essentially embittered by the prospect of surrounding misery, who daily beholds, with untroubled composure, innumerable countenances clouded with dejection and despair. Were the state of suffering with which we have long been familiar removed from immediate observation, we could scarcely hear of it without agitation; how much more afflicting to be placed in the midst of it, to feel it pressing on our senses in all directions, without the power of contributing any thing to its mitigation and relief, beyond a barren and impotent commiseration! Is there no hazard of contracting a fatal induration by a daily familiarity with indigence which we cannot alleviate, with scenes of woe we can neither remove nor diminish? To *go* into the house of mourning is good, since it is adapted to impress salutary lessons; but to *dwell* in a situation where every house is become such, is a state to which nothing but utter insensibility can be reconciled.

There are, however, higher, if not more affecting, considerations connected with the present subject. If the evil which we have now the means of escaping should return, it will be in vain for us to flatter ourselves with a long duration of tranquillity; a starving must not be expected to be a contented population, nor will any change be deprecated by those to whom existence itself has become a burthen. The instinctive feelings of nature will urge to some desperate effort, and they will cease to be restrained by legal coercion who already suffer more than the utmost rigour of the law can inflict. The heart that is withered with despair obtains an awful emancipation from the ordinary restraints of human action; and when a considerable portion of the people is reduced to that extremity, what is to be expected but that the physical energies which are found inadequate to the subsist-

ence of their possessors by the exercise of honest industry, will take an unnatural and destructive direction?

The manufacture of this county is so fortunately circumstanced in being exempted from foreign interference and competition, that nothing can materially injure it except its internal mismanagement. In the article of hosiery we possess a monopoly. While cotton thread is allowed to be exported, and to give birth to numerous foreign establishments, the kinds of wool necessary for our manufacture are prohibited from going abroad. We have the exclusive command of the market, and are under no necessity of having recourse to a reduction of price in order to defeat the competition of foreign manufacturers. All is in our own power; and if a spirit of miserable and short-sighted rivalry is suffered to depress the hire, and extinguish the comforts of the labouring mechanic, it is the odious spectacle of a family quarrelling amongst themselves. Secured from external injury, and less affected by the vicissitudes of war and peace than perhaps any other branch of commerce, because it is concerned in an article of the first necessity; those who are employed in it have only to remain true to themselves, and they may bid defiance to every effort of hostility. "If ye bite and devour," says holy writ, "see that ye are not consumed one of another." What can be more detestable than to see a system pursued which can have no other possible termination or object than the sacrifice of the happiness of the many to a few, an inconceivable few, whose prosperity is cemented by the tears of a distressed and ruined population!

In order to give employment to those who are thrown out of work, and to lighten the poor rates, some parishes have established manufactories of their own. While the system of depression continued, it was natural to have recourse to an expedient which accomplished its immediate object. But if it is proposed to give perpetuity to the present statement, that practice must be abandoned. The parishes can afford to dispose of their goods at little or no profit; but the regular manufacturers, it is natural to expect, will not submit to be undersold by a class of

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persons whom they cannot but regard as intruders. hence arises a new source of competition, and a consequent depression of wages. It is in vain to expect that the manufacturer will adhere to a liberal statement of wages while he is exposed to a rivalry conducted upon unequal terms.

It is surely not too much to hope, that the good sense of parishes will prompt them to put a speedy end to this practice, and that no selfish calculation of local or immediate advantage will tempt them to support a system pregnant with extensive mischief.

It gives the writer sincere concern to hear that there are even some frame-work knitters themselves so blind to their own interest as to refuse to contribute to the general fund. With men who are resolved to shut their eyes on consequences, and are unwilling to sacrifice the smallest immediate, to the greatest future advantage, it is in vain to reason, since they have renounced the prerogative of thinking beings. As the frame-work knitters are the description of persons immediately interested, it is they who must give the first impulse. It is in vain for those to look for help who are unwilling to help themselves; and when so small a portion of their earnings is sufficient, with the assistance of a generous public, to secure them from the recurrence of recent sufferings, it is not in the power of words to express the folly which hesitates to make the necessary sacrifice. The whole system of life is a series of compromises with unavoidable evil, in which material inconveniences are endured for the acquisition of future good: and he who aspires to enjoyments unaccompanied by the necessity of self-denial and sacrifice, will not retain them long. Such, also, is the power of combination, that, small as is the sum which each individual is called to disburse, the amount of numerous contributions will lay a solid foundation for future prosperity, by protecting them from the encroachments of unfeeling rapacity.

It is asserted there are some manufacturers who have absolutely prohibited their workmen from contributing their quota to the fund. For the honour of human nature, we hope the report is unfounded. We are reluctant to suppose there can be found, in a christian country, men so callous to the sentiments of humanity, as to interdict the means of self-preservation, or of temper so despotic as to attempt to infringe on the essential right of every reasonable being to consult his interest by providing for future contingencies. Let it suffice to have refused their aid to their fellow-creatures while struggling in the waves, without driving them back when they have gained the shore. We earnestly recommend the periodical publication of a correct list of the contributors, and the non-contributors, together with the reasons assigned for the conduct of the latter, that blame may be imputed only where it is due, and the patrons of oppression (if such there be) may be made amenable to the tribunal of public opinion.

From a partial view of the magnitude of the object before us, and of the extent of the mischief which requires to be remedied, those districts which are not the seat of manufacture, have manifested a reluctance to contribute; a narrow and mistaken policy, which deserves the severest reprobation. Whether the workmen in the principal manufacture of a populous county sink into wretchedness and beggary, or are maintained in a state of comfort, can never be an uninteresting circumstance to any part of its inhabitants. Humanity apart, it requires but little attention to perceive that as the ability to purchase, and, consequently, the extent of purchasers, is regulated, not by the wants, but by the pecuniary resources of the buyer, to those who have any thing to dispose of, the poverty of their customers must necessarily be injurious. But the frame-work knitters and their families constitute the most numerous class of consumers in the county, and the quantity of their consumption must be proportioned to the extent of their earnings. The circulation of money depends as much on the wages of labour, as on the profits of stock; and if thirty thousand persons rise from abject poverty to a capacity of commanding a larger share of the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life, the money which pro-

cures them will flow into every channel, so as to benefit alike the tradesman, the agriculturist, and the landed proprietor. The infusion of a new *pabulum* of life into the extremities, will strengthen and invigorate the whole body.

Let not the inhabitants of those towns and villages where no manufacture is carried on, suffer themselves to be deluded into false security, and because they hear not the sound of the knitting frame, nor behold its productions spread before their eyes, flatter themselves with the hope of impunity in the midst of surrounding distress. The ties of civil society are too close and intricate, the reciprocal action of its respective parts too great, to admit of a local circumscription of calamity. The natural effect of a remarkable depression in the staple manufacture of a county is to spread commercial embarrassment and distress throughout the whole, of which we have already had sufficient experience in the difficulties under which trade, of every description, has laboured, in consequence of the paucity of money and the diminution of demand. The tradesman, it is true, feels the effect in its first stage of operation, the agriculturist in the next, in a diminished consumption of his raw produce.

In the moral system, it is a part of the wise arrangements of Providence, that no member shall suffer alone; that if the lower classes are involved in wretchedness and beggary, the more elevated shall not enjoy their prosperity unimpaired. That constitution of society is radically unsound, of which the inferior order is vicious and miserable: a wretched and degraded populace is a rent in the foundation; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, a taint of rottenness at the root of society, which will infallibly wither and decay its remotest branches. Alarming as the present aspect of affairs unquestionably is, the most appalling feature of the times is the prevailing discontent of the lower orders; discontent arising not so much from the infusion of speculative principles, as from the impression of actual distress. Alleviate their distress, convince them at least of your solicitude to do it, and

you extirpate the seeds of disaffection far more effectually than by all the arts of intimidation. But if an insensibility to their sufferings in the higher ranks goads them to despair, nourishes an appetite for change, and prepares them to lend themselves to the sophistry of artful demagogues and unprincipled empirics, what will be the consequence, but a divided and distracted empire, where, instead of uniting to consolidate the resources of general prosperity, the necessity of employing one part of the nation in the coercion or punishment of the other, dissipates its efforts, and cripples its energy? We have the highest authority for asserting that a "kingdom divided against itself cannot stand;" and surely no schism in the body politic can be more fatal than that which alienates the hands from the head, the physical strength of society from its presiding intellect.

It may be objected to these observations, that, however just, they are irrelevant to the subject in hand, which relates not to a national, but to a provincial object. To which the reply is obvious, that every manufacturing county constitutes an important part of the nation, and that there is no absurdity in supposing that the arrangement which is adapted to the situation of one, may be applied with equal advantage, to another. Be this as it may, if the tranquillity of a central department of the empire can be maintained by a measure, which, while it rescues a numerous description of persons from the deepest misery, is beneficial to all, and burthensome to none, much is contributed to the fund of national prosperity, composed as it is, of separate portions of individual enjoyment and security.

Waiving, for the present, the consideration of the tendency of the measure in question to promote the welfare of the nation, the writer of these lines must be permitted to avow his attachment to his *natale solum*, to the soil that gave him birth, which recalls the image of his youth, with those affecting recollections which nature longest retains, and reluctantly quits. The philanthropy which affects to feel alike for every part of mankind, is false and spurious; that alone is genuine

which glows with a warmth proportioned to the nearness of its objects. But who, that is not utterly devoid of such sentiments, can compare the present condition of the county with the past, without deep emotion? The writer well remembers it when it was the abode of health and competence; a temperate and unstrained industry diffused plenty through its towns and villages; the harsh and dissonant sound of the loom was not unpleasant to the ear, mingled with the evidence of the activity which it indicated, and the comfort it produced; the advance of summer invited the peasant to a grateful change of labour, while the village poured forth its cheerful population to assist in preparing the tedded grass, and reap the golden harvest; content resided in its valleys, joy echoed from its hills; the distresses of poverty were almost unknown, except by the idle and the profligate, its natural victims; and even the transition from peace was rather heard at a distance, than felt as a positive calamity. Some provinces, it is confessed, abounded with more splendid objects, with more curious specimens of art, and grander scenes of nature; but it was surpassed by none in the general diffusion of prosperity. But what a contrast is now presented, in the languid and emaciated forms, and dejected looks, of our industrious mechanics, who with difficulty drag their trembling limbs over scenes where their fathers gazed with rapture, "pleased with each rural sight, each rural sound!" A rapid depression of wages, like a gangrene, preys upon their vitals, and exhausts their strength. The crisis is arrived which is to decide the destiny of this part of the kingdom; its fate for the present generation, to say the least, depends, under Providence, entirely on the success of the measure now in agitation; and how, let me ask, can its hereditary nobility exert themselves more laudably, than by stretching forth the hand to save from ruin the county which gave them birth, and includes the fund of their wealth, the scene of their magnificence, and the sepulchre of their fathers?

Though this appeal is, with the utmost propriety, made to them in the first instance, it is not confined to that

elevated order; there is not a description of persons within the limits of the county who ought to contemplate the crisis with indifference; and so essential is the success of the present expedient to every hope of deliverance, that whatever be his station, he who withholds his quota from the general contribution, may justly consider himself as accessary to its ruin.

If there be any motive wanting, in addition to those which have been already urged, to excite us to exertion, it is found in the exemplary conduct of the principal sufferers. Never were privations so distressing endured with more manly fortitude; and, for my own part, I cannot look back on the patience and the constancy displayed through such a protracted scene of suffering, without ascribing it to a calm confidence in that Providence, which sooner or later, never fails to interpose in behalf of such as trust in it, and which, at length, has inspired wisdom to discover, and resolution to apply, the only remedy. They have deplored their misery, they have exhibited their grievances, to the view of the public, in the language of nature and of truth, but rarely, if ever, have they forgotten their duties. Far from shrinking from the necessity of making the first sacrifice, they have cheerfully come forward to establish the present fund, to which they have engaged to contribute sixpence a week out of their scanty earnings. We will not suppose for a moment a reluctance on the part of the public to assist and encourage a description of persons, whose welfare is inseparably combined with their own; and who, to the praise of patient endurance under the severest of trials, have added that of united and manly exertion to prevent their recurrence.

A REPLY

TO THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS ADVANCED BY

COBBETT AND OTHERS

AGAINST THE

FRAME-WORK KNITTERS' FRIENDLY RELIEF SOCIETY.

PUBLISHED IN 1821.]

A REPLY.

THE virulent opposition made to the *Frame-work Knitters' Friendly Relief Society*—a protective policy to secure themselves from the pressure of poverty and the pains of hunger,—may well excite the surprise of the reflecting and humane part of the public. This violence with which it is assailed forms, indeed, the most remarkable feature of the business, and is alone sufficient to awaken suspicion of a design not distinctly avowed. Its opponents are loud in proclaiming their conviction that it cannot possibly endure, that it must shortly come to an end. Why then not leave it to its fate? Why display this anxiety to accelerate its overthrow, these violent and persevering efforts to crush the feeble and precipitate the falling? If, as they contend, it contains within itself the seeds of speedy dissolution, no evil can result from abandoning it to the operation of its native tendencies, and suffering it to die a natural death. Is it not apparent that all this commotion and effort indicate a suspicion that it is not so fraught with the elements of self-destruction as they pretend, and that it *requires* to be powerfully assailed?

Its opponents confidently assert that it has no tendency to keep up the rate of wages—that these are regulated by causes over which it has no control—and that, in defiance of every possible arrangement, they will infallibly find their level. If such is really their conviction, their zeal is still more preposterous. For where is the policy or the prudence of exposing themselves to the suspicion of insensibility to the distresses of the working classes, by opposing a scheme which can have no effects, produce

no consequences, while it continues, and the futility of which will be shortly apparent to all? The list of prices agreed upon between the employers and their men, they assert, is higher than the state of the trade will allow; and that, could it be maintained, it would be detrimental to the manufacturing interest, by preventing the sale of the article. Admitting this, it would afford a sufficient reason for opposing a measure which had a tendency to produce that effect, namely, the continuance of the Statement. But as it is loudly affirmed that the Frame-work Knitters' Union has no such tendency, but will leave the rate of wages just as it was, why this superfluity of zeal in opposing what can produce no mischief? If such is their real opinion, they are fighting with a shadow—combating a phantom. This, however, will hardly be supposed. Men are not accustomed to exert themselves with vehemence against an object of which they entertain no apprehension: they usually proportion their efforts to their alarms.

It is impossible not to discern, in the wanton and virulent attack of Cobbett, and others, on the *Frame-work Knitters' Society*, that more is meant than meets the ear — that a purpose is aimed which is not yet ripe for disclosure. Of this we may be assured, that there lurks at the bottom of this opposition a secret persuasion that the permanence of the Union will effect a permanent elevation of wages, above that extreme point of depression to which they had before subsided.

Here the first question which arises is, whether the recompense of labour previous to the establishment of a fund, was such, on an average, as to enable a workman to procure for himself and his family the ordinary necessaries of life. For the answer to this we might refer the reader to our opponents, who, with some variation in their statements, unanimously acknowledge they were not sufficient for that purpose. The anonymous writer, who styles himself "An Observer," feebly attempts, it is true, to palliate the wretched condition of the workmen by referring us to the price of provisions, not in Leicestershire be it remembered, but

in Taunton,* and by informing us that a man working a frame of *thirty-two or finer gauge*, twelve hours a day, can earn eight shillings a week.† As in this very passage he is declaiming against "extreme statements as suspicious," who would suspect that the very passage which censures contains an example of it? But so it is; for the writer is informed, by the most experienced manufacturers, that the kind of work adduced is of a superior order, on which very few, in comparison, are employed; and that the average earnings previous to the Union were from five shillings and sixpence to six shillings a week, not a moiety of the sum adequate to the decent support of an industrious family. The enormous pressure on the parishes which are the principal seats of manufacture, place the matter of fact for which we are contending, beyond all controversy. But that "the labourer is worthy of his hire" is as much the dictate of reason as of scripture: and if there be any spectacle which shocks the natural feeling of justice, it is the sight of industry rewarded with famine — of a life devoted to severe and incessant toil, without the power of procuring the means of its own support. This is a state of things from which humanity recoils; but such was the condition of the greater part of the workmen previous to the *Union*.

The next question is, whether the sufferers have not a natural right to attempt the melioration of their condition; and by any means, consistent with the peace of society, and the inviolable security of property, to endeavour to rescue themselves from a state in which death is preferable to life. For what purpose, let me ask, is reason bestowed, if not to assist its possessor in contriving the means of alleviating his calamities and of improving his situation? The skill and labour of the poor man constitute his whole possession, and he has a right to place it to the best advantage, for precisely the same reason that the rich capitalist is entitled to make the most advantageous disposal of his wealth. He has consequently, if he pleases, a right to set aside a portion

* Observer, p. 5 † Ibid. p. 6.

of his earnings towards securing the means of a just and natural remuneration of his industry. I call that a just and natural remuneration which enables him to procure the necessaries of life for himself and his family. If, by the exercise of foresight and self-denial, he can evade the fatal necessity of lying entirely at the mercy of his master, where is the impropriety of his conduct, or of what have the public to complain? But such is precisely the principle of the *Frame-work Knitters' Union.* It is merely the policy of self-defence; an instrument invented by themselves, and supported principally from their own resources, for securing that recompense of labour which their employers with much unanimity affirmed to be reasonable, and which they voluntarily consented to give. It is not to be confounded for a moment with a combination to *raise* wages; it is merely a provision for securing the terms mutually stipulated between their employers and themselves. The necessity of some such measure was demonstrated by experience; a statement had been promised on a former occasion, but it was found that while there was a surplus of labour in the market, however inconsiderable, it was converted into a means of effecting a universal depression, far below the scale to which it would have naturally descended, in consequence of the decreased demand. That wages should decline to a certain extent along with the demand, is the natural consequence of the vicissitudes of trade; still, it is but equitable that they should bear some proportion to each other. We will suppose, out of ten thousand hands engaged in this manufacture, that one thousand are out of employ; here, supposing the remainder to labour with only their usual degree of assiduity, there are nine-tenths of the manufacture produced which was made when they were all at work. The probable demand has diminished one-tenth. But if the effect of this is to reduce the wages nearly one-half, so as to place the necessaries of life out of the reach of the workmen, is not this a result to be deplored? and if any means, consistent with the peace of society, can be contrived to prevent it, ought

they not to be adopted? In this case it is in vain to allege that the depression in question is rendered necessary in consequence of the decreased demand, because they bear no proportion one to the other. The demand is, by the supposition, diminished one-tenth—the wages are reduced nearly one-third. Such was the exact state of things at the late *turn-out* in Leicestershire. A proportion of about one in ten were unemployed, and this surplus of labour was converted, by a process not very creditable to the humanity of its authors, into an instrument of universal depression, to the extent already stated. The method by which it was accomplished is extremely simple. Those who are out of employ were driven, by the distress of their situation, to offer their services on terms the most disadvantageous; the offer was accepted; and this afforded a pretext for gradually lowering the wages of the rest, who had no alternative but to submit to the abatement proposed, or quit their employ. Further reductions were imposed, which, for the same reason, were, for the most part, submitted to; till, through a few successive stages, the wages of all were brought to the same level. Thus the wretched workmen were reduced to the necessity of acquiescing, not in that abatement of wages which was proportioned to the diminished demand, but in the terms which a small minority, were induced to accept; and the destitution and despair of a few became the gauge by which the miseries of all were measured out. If there is a man to be found who is perfectly reconciled to such a procedure, who sees nothing in it inconsistent with the dictates of the most refined and enlightened humanity, his mental structure is such as I shall never envy.

Since, in the case before us, it is the surplus of labour alone which affords the facility of affecting a depression so destructive, by obliging those who are unemployed to engage themselves at a price by which they could not live; the object of the *Union* is simply to take away that necessity, by withdrawing that portion of redundant labour which produced it; a mode of proceeding perfectly

analogous to that which takes place in every branch of trade and manufacture. He who is engaged in these, endeavours invariably to adjust the extent of the supply to the demand; if his capital enables him, he withholds his commodities from the market when it is glutted, and reproduces them when they are more eagerly called for. Is there any principle of political economy conceived to be violated by this discretionary power of the manufacturer to adjust his productions to his demand—to withdraw them from the market at his pleasure, when he foresees their sale will fetch no adequate returns? But this, *mutatis mutandis*, or with a slight change of names is exactly the case under present discussion. The labour and skill of the mechanic or the artist constitute the articles *he* has to dispose of; and the Frame-work Knitters' Fund, against which such a clamour has been raised by interested and designing men, is nothing more or less than a provision for withholding such a portion of that article, as he perceives cannot be employed without ruinous consequences. If the principles of political economy are those of justice and common sense, they will authorize no more interference with the labouring mechanic, than with the tradesman or manufacturer: and if the manufacturer is not compelled to dispose of his productions on destructive terms, why should the mechanic be obliged thus to dispose of his labour? It will be acknowledged, it is more *difficult* for the mechanic to adjust his labour to the demand, than it is for the manufacturer to regulate his supply by the state of the market; but this is a distinct consideration: the Frame-work Knitters' Fund is contrived with a view to obviate this difficulty, it has already done it to a great degree, and nothing but a more general cooperation of the workmen, and of parishes, is wanted to enable them to surmount it altogether.

The principles of political economy exclude the exercise of compulsion only, and, by consequence, all sort of legislative interference in commercial transactions: they were never understood by a single writer to control the exercise of free agency in any class of the community,

and consequently not in the *Leicestershire Frame-work Knitters*. The science of political economy assumes for its basis, that every person best understands his own business; that the desire of improving his condition is inherent in man; and that when every one is left to pursue his individual interest in his own way, without injuring others, the combined successes arising from the unfettered endeavours of each to advance his particular interest, will produce a greater aggregate of wealth than it is possible to realize under a pervading system of legislative control. This is the master-principle of that science; and on this principle, the makers of stockings must be supposed to understand their own interest best; they have had a long and severe training in the school of adversity; and they are unanimously of opinion that the establishment of a fund out of their own earnings, in aid of such as are out of employ, is the most efficient expedient for maintaining an adequate rate of wages. Having learned from experience that no agreement with their masters will stand, unless it is protected by such a provision, they have made it chiefly from their own resources, assisted by those parishes whose interest is deeply implicated in their support.

As far as the Fund is supported by the voluntary contributions of the men and of the parishes, both actuated solely by a view to their own interest, the whole proceeding is perfectly consonant to the principles of political economy, correctly interpreted; and for the voluntary contributions of the public, they are to be considered as entirely provisionary, to be continued no longer than is necessary to give stability to an infant institution; in which light they are abundantly justified by the principles of humanity, which are paramount to every other.

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in a particular manufacture; when in fact the whole affair originated with themselves, by whom it has all along been chiefly supported, and on whose exertions, aided by the parishes which are deeply interested in its preservation, its permanence entirely depends. As our opponents, there is little doubt, "hissed for this fly," it is probable he was not put in possession of a circumstance which forms the nerves and sinews of the Union, but supplied with that information only which best suited their purpose. A serious alarm must have been felt to prompt them to have recourse to such an ally.

"Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo."

The omission of this fact enables him to invest the whole business with an air of ridicule, for which a just statement of the case would have furnished no pretence. An extensive combination of the public to assist the Frame-work Knitters, may, considered by itself, appear somewhat romantic; but when it is viewed in the light of a temporary support to an institution, which has to struggle with difficulties arising from the ignorance of some, and the self-interested perverseness and prejudice of others, it assumes a different character. The public have, in my humble opinion, displayed both humanity and wisdom in lending their aid to a plan which has already effected much good, and promises in its fuller developement to accomplish much more; but their assistance, however meritorious, must be considered as provisionary, while the permanence of the plan wholly depends on the exertions of the workmen, and the parishes. It is on the principle of an appropriation of a part of their earnings to their mutual assistance, and as a means of enabling parishes to alleviate a numerous class at the least possible expense, that its merits must be tried, and its advantages estimated.

The "Observer" asserts that it has done little or nothing towards alleviating the general distress. The truth of this assertion, however, may be safely left to the discernment of the public. Let *them* say whether the situation of the workmen has not been materially

improved during the two years that the *Union* has subsisted. When its effect has been to raise wages at least one-third, is it possible to doubt whether such an augmentation has been productive of a proportionable increase of comfort; or what but an experience of its advantages could have prompted men, not remarkably gifted with self-denying habits, to persist so long in making such a sacrifice?

Cobbett loudly and repeatedly asserts that the manufacturers *cannot afford* to give higher wages, referring to the conduct of those Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire houses which continue to stand out, as a decisive proof of his position. "If the price," he says, "can be afforded, why do not those hosiers in most extensive business give it? If they *aver* that they can afford it, why do they not give it? Mind, it is the hosiers in most extensive business that aver this, and yet they do not give the price."* It is a sufficient reply to these triumphant interrogations, that the most respectable hosiers *do* give it, and that they who do not, find by experience, that they can procure their work to be done on lower terms; the reason of which, is a surplus of labour in the market, whose operation in causing an universal depression has been already described.

It is the opinion of the most judicious manufacturers the writer has had the opportunity of consulting, that the demand for hosiery was little, if at all, diminished at the period immediately preceding the greatest depression of wages, nor was the number out of employ previously to its taking place more than ordinary. The system of depression in this county, it is a matter of public notoriety, did not originate in a decreased demand, nor did it proceed in any assignable proportion to that supposed diminution; it originated entirely in a vicious competition among a few individuals, for the monopoly of the London market. It was the eagerness of certain individuals to undersell each other in that market, which gave birth to the

* Cobbett, p. 70.

system, and to all the unspeakable calamities which have resulted from it. The process, by which it was effected, has been already explained so often that I am afraid to repeat it: it was brought about through the medium of such as were out of employ, who, by offering themselves on inferior terms, afforded an opportunity, eagerly embraced, of gradually reducing the rest to the same level. The hosiers must surely be allowed to be the best judges what wages they can afford, a great majority of whom have recorded their judgement on this subject, by a voluntary agreement to give the *statement* price, signed and attested by their own hand. Ask any one of them who may have departed from it, why he did so? and if the reason he assigns is founded on a decreased demand, and the consequent necessity of depressing wages, I would almost consent to yield to our opponents the whole question at issue. No: this is not the answer, the writer of this can aver from his own knowledge it is not: it is always a reference to some other person, who is affirmed (whether truly or not signifies nothing) to get his work performed at a cheaper rate. In answer then to the question urged with so much exultation by Cobbett, "If the manufacturers can afford to give higher wages, why are they not given?" suffice it to say, that men are often little disposed to give what it is in their power to withhold; and that what is abated in wages is either added to profits, or goes to enable them to undersell their competitors, and by that means command a more extensive trade. Could it be proved that the *statement* had produced a glut in the market, by exceeding the demand, there would be some plausibility in Mr. Cobbett's representation; as it is, nothing can be more futile.

With a rudeness congenial with his habits, he grossly insults the anonymous writer who styles himself "Humanus," for asserting that men of little or no capital have compelled the superior manufacturers to depress the wages of their workmen, in order to prevent themselves from being excluded from the market. This he represents as the greatest of all absurdities; telling him that

he ought to have styled himself fool or hypocrite, for hazarding such a statement. If insolence were the proper corrective of folly, Mr. Cobbett would of all men be best qualified to administer the cure, though on that supposition his interference would be impertinent in the present instance. His confident assertion of the impossibility of a fact which is known to exist by all intelligent men in the county, is a specimen of his ignorance of the trade on which he so dogmatically decides. Men of little or no capital are incapable of bearing stock; they must dispose of their article at whatever price they can get, without waiting for a more favourable season. Hence they are the first to make sacrifices, to diminish the extent of which, and to enable them to sell immediately without absolute loss, they are under peculiar temptations to beat down the wages of their workmen, temptations from which the more opulent manufacturer is exempt; and when there is any considerable number out of employ, they easily find the means of effecting their object. A system, it is well known to all who reside in this county, is established, by which an extensive trade in hosiery is conducted by persons of little or no capital. Their bills, weekly drawn on London, are accepted, which is equivalent to a weekly supply of capital; and the inducement to afford this accommodation, is the extremely low price of the goods which are manufactured *under the statement.* Is there a hosier in Leicestershire who will venture to deny the justice of this statement? In fact, this system has been carried to such an extent, that the most opulent hosiers have of late succeeded worse, old-established houses have quitted the business in disgust, and the trade has been gradually transferred to those who have profited by the gradual depression of wages.

If the Frame-work Knitters' Union is dissolved, it is universally allowed they will sink and lower, nor can any limits be assigned to which they may not descend. Before its formation, nearly half the subsistence of the workmen was drawn from the parishes, or in other words, from the public. But what can be conceived

more monstrous than a manufacture carried on at the public expense, but not for the public benefit, where all the profits are appropriated to one description of persons, while the public are taxed to an enormous amount to enable a few individuals to secure to themselves those advantages? Is there an anomaly in the social system more prodigious than this, or more pregnant with the most alarming consequences? Is it a greater enormity, let me ask, to be compelled to support a numerous herd of sinecurists, pensioners, and "eaters of taxes," to use the elegant phraseology of Mr. Cobbett, than to pay half the wages of an extensive manufacture, without deriving from it one farthing of profit, while it swells out a putrid stream of pauperism which overflows the land? Mr. Cobbett perhaps sees nothing in such a state repugnant to his feelings; in the despair of the poor, and the utter incapacity of the parishes to relieve their wants, he seems to exult, as the infallible prognostic of some great convulsion; but there are those, and I hope not a few, who will contemplate such a prospect with horror.

He is anxious to impress the belief that the distress of the frame-work knitters is to be ascribed to the accumulation of taxes, and to no other cause. This, from beginning to end is his darling theme. It is far from my intention to deny that the general decay of trade and commerce is intimately connected with the enormous weight of taxation: or that it is in vain to expect a return to national prosperity, unless some efficient means are devised to lighten their pressure. It is equally certain, however, though the exhausting effect of excessive taxation may have prepared a way for the evils we deplore, that a system has been adopted in the hosiery trade which has aggravated the calamity of the working class, far beyond the necessary operation of that general cause. The taxes are the same in the west of England as in the midland counties; but the wages in the clothing districts have not been reduced: the manufacture of cloth has been all along adjusted to the demand. The weight of taxes is as heavy in the Staffordshire potteries

as here; but the remuneration of labour has remained steady and uniform. Less work is given out in proportion as the demand slackens; and I have it from the best authority, that the earnings of the workmen are, at this moment, abundantly adequate to their means of subsistence. They are three times as high as those of the stocking-makers were before the formation of the *Union*. By the system pursued in these branches, the evils resulting from a decreased demand are kept within their natural limits; no adventitious ingredient is infused into the cup, no artificial aggravation added to their sufferings. But in the hosiery manufacture it is just the reverse: the calamity indirectly inflicted on the industrious poor by means of such as are out of employ, is incalculably greater than that which results from the failure of employment; and the destitution of a part becomes, in skilful hands, a mighty engine for the destruction of the whole.

What is the remedy proposed by our opponents? "The only effectual relief," Humanus says, "for the distresses of the frame-work knitters, is for a great part of the present hands to leave the trade, and that not for a season, but entirely and for ever." We needed not the information of this sagacious adviser, that the root of the mischief lies in a redundancy of hands, that it is devoutly to be wished that parents would cease as much as possible to train up their children to this calling, that masters would take fewer apprentices, and some method could be discovered to lessen the number engaged in this branch of manufacture. This is all very desirable. But what is to become of the existing generation? To what employ can they turn with advantage who have acquired no other craft, and whose habits totally disqualify them for agricultural labour, were it to be procured? Under these circumstances, to advise them to "retire entirely and for ever," is to recommend suicide and death. Is not the *general* decay of trade and manufacture the topic of universal complaint, and must not the greatest difficulty be encountered, where all the ranks of employment are dense with population,

and crowded to excess, in attempting to open a fresh career for their industry? Unless something more practicable and definite is suggested, to bid them retire because they are not wanted, is not to advise, but to mock them.

The formation of a fund towards the support of such as are incapable of procuring work, but upon such terms as are ruinous to every description of their brethren, presents a specific remedy for the existing disorder, and the only one which is not equivalent to a cruel mockery of their woes.

The principal sophism which pervades the strictures of Mr. Cobbett, and others, on this subject, is a vicious generalization, in consequence of which he imagines he has sufficiently accounted for the wretched state of the workmen in a particular manufacture, by referring it to the cause which has produced a declension in the state of trade and manufacture in general; whence he infers that he is entitled to pour ridicule and contempt upon every expedient which is distinct from the removal of that cause. But along with the general source of a decline in commerce, there are a number of *particular circumstances* which must be noticed, in order to account for that state of depression in which some branches are found, in comparison with others. As far as our political embarrassments alone are concerned, their operation must be *equally* disadvantageous to every species of productive labour, to every kind of trade and manufacture whatever. But these are not all equally depressed, which they must have been if the political state of the nation were alone sufficient to account for all the phenomena. The fact is, that while every department of manufacture is probably injured by our pecuniary embarrassments, the working classes, in some, are found to be in a much more favourable situation than in others. The remuneration of labour, for example, in the western clothing districts, in the Staffordshire potteries, I might add in no part of the kingdom, has been depressed as it has been here. The reason of this has been again and again explained; it has arisen from the illiberal advantage which has been taken of a surplus of labour, while, in the districts just referred to, that practice has not been adopted, less work is given out when less is demanded, and the earnings are sufficient to procure all the necessaries, and some of the comforts of life. As the distemper is local and specific, the remedy must be of the same description.

The list of prices agreed upon is considerably less than is sufficient to maintain the condition which honest industry ought ever to occupy, decidedly less than might be afforded in a more prosperous state of the country. It is such, however, as the great body of the masters have declared themselves able to give, while they affirm they can do no more. Since their conviction of their ability to do this is a deliberate recorded opinion, let the reader judge of the audacity of Mr. Cobbett in the following assertion: "He, Humanus," says Mr. Cobbett, "affirms that the hosiers in the most extensive business aver they can afford the statement prices. We might treat this as nothing, we might call it a falsehood, because it is against reason, and because the averment is not produced and attested; we have the bare word of an anonymous writer for it; that is all, and that is nothing." "We might call it a falsehood;" certainly Mr. Cobbett might, who displays throughout such an intimate familiarity with the "father of lies;" but let us hope no other man could be found who would stigmatize as a falsehood, the assertion that such is the averment of the manufacturers, after they had signed and attested it with their own hand. This recorded opinion is an unanswerable confutation of the assertion, so often repeated by our opponents, that the hosiers cannot afford the *statement* price; for surely they will not be so absurd as to impute to them a formal resolution of giving wages, which they were conscious at the time they could not well afford. It may, therefore, be assumed as a fact, placed beyond all dispute, that the *statement* proposed is such as will leave a reasonable rate of profits to the hosiers, from whence we adduce two conclusions; first, that the assertion of those who maintain that the *state-*

ment, were it adhered to, would be ruinous to the trade, is a falsehood, because it is formally contradicted by the persons who must be allowed, in what immediately concerns their own interest, to be the best judges: secondly, that besides the operation of taxes in deteriorating wages, other causes, of a more specific nature, have contributed to produce that effect, and that, consequently, the whole argumentation of Mr. Cobbett, which proceeds upon the denial of this, falls to the ground.

It is repeatedly objected by the "Observer," that the proposed *statement* can never become permanent, because it is impossible to induce the masters to adhere unanimously to their agreement. To this I answer, that such unanimity is not contemplated, nor is it necessary. The principal, perhaps the only benefit of the agreement is, that it stamps a legal character on the proceedings of the men, which might otherwise expose them to the penalties of combination. If they become sufficiently enlightened to their own interests, to afford an adequate support to the fund, the surplus labour will be disposed of, and it will no longer be in the power of those who may be disposed to convert it into an instrument of universal depression. The list of prices agreed upon at Nottingham, in the year 1819, to which the "Observer" refers, produced no permanent effect in Nottinghamshire, nor in Derbyshire, because no fund was established in those counties to support it; in Leicestershire the same agreement was followed by the most efficient consequences, because it received that support. And this is the reason, and the only reason, that every thing reverted so soon to its former state; not, as this writer affirms, in consequence of a diminution of demand produced by the *statement;* for, had this been the cause, the effect would have been felt in Leicestershire equally, but it was not, solely because the surplus of labour was removed by the provisions of the fund.

The "Observer" further remarks, that "it borders on the ludicrous to talk of men *plunged in the very depths of despair*, from their scanty earnings raising a fund for their unemployed associates; and, unless they can do

this, their project must fail." This writer forgets that he had before represented these very men in a tolerably comfortable state, referring us for proof to the price of provisions in the Taunton market. It suited the scope of his argument then to elevate their condition, whom he now, for a similar purpose, "*plunges into the very depths of despair*." The reader will, in a moment, perceive what credit is due to a writer who is entangled in such contradictions, who attributes to the same persons comfort and despair, just as it suits his convenience. But, passing these inconsistencies, the reply is obvious, that, if the manufacturers in the neighbouring counties imitate the example of this, their men, no longer plunged into the very depths of despair, will be incomparably more able to subscribe sixpence a week to the fund, than to procure subsistence in their present circumstances. The "Observer" must be aware that their competence to contribute their quota is assumed only on the supposition of the *statement* being given; and he must not be permitted to change suppositions backwards and forwards, with the same dexterity that he converts comfort into despair. Since it is allowed by our opponents, that, where no fund exists, the workmen are "in the depths of despair," the only question is, what must be done? How is the intolerable load under which they are groaning to be alleviated or removed? Mr. Cobbett's grand panacea is, recourse to the parishes; not that he is so ignorant as to suppose it possible they should afford effectual relief, but that he forsees other effects resulting from it, which he is evidently much more anxious to realise. "But," says he, "are you to have no redress? Are you to starve, in short? No: no man, woman, or child is to starve; the law says so, and rely upon the law. A man works constantly; he is sober, he wastes nothing. His master can or will give him no more; and with what he gets he is starving with his family. Now what says the law? Why, that he shall he relieved, that he shall share out of the common stock, out of that which was originally one man's as well as another's; out of that

which God gave for all—out of the *land*."* But is he not aware that the pressure of parish rates is already almost intolerable; that they are levied on thousands who are themselves on the brink of pauperism; and that, in many parts of the country, they have reduced the value of land to such a state, that even were it occupied free of rent, the farmer could hardly subsist by the produce? It is true they may not have reached the point which Mr. Cobbett triumphantly contemplates, the utter ruin and extinction of landed proprietors; but they have already attained a portentous magnitude, which no lover of his country can contemplate without dismay.

This seems to be the proper place for noticing a monstrous position advanced by this writer, with a confidence which can only be surpassed by its falsehood. "Viewing the thing in its true light," he says, "what is the nation, and particularly *the landed proprietor*, to gain by an additional sum being given to you in wages? What is he to gain by a million of money paid to stocking weavers *more* than is now paid to them? Is there not a million *less* to be laid out by somebody else? If the labourer pays a crown a year more for stockings, has he not a crown less to lay out in bread and beer? If, indeed, the additional million were paid to you, were to be expended by you, or flung into the sea; or if the additional million were to drop down into your hands from the clouds, in either of these cases there might be some sense in Humanus's argument: as the thing is, it is nonsense."† This is the reasoning, be it remembered, of the man who in the same pamphlet ascribes all our calamities "to so large a portion being taken from those who labour, to be given to those who do not labour."‡ If the above reasoning is correct, it would follow that the value of land would not be diminished, though the stocking weavers earned nothing at all, but were entirely supported by the parish. On this supposition,

* Cobbett, p. 97. † Ibid. p. 91. ‡ Ibid. p. 117.

it is true they would have no wages, but some other persons would possess them, or, which is the same thing, their amount, which, if they had *not*, they would be less able to purchase the produce of the soil, in exact proportion to that amount. More error and absurdity, I will venture to assert, were never penned within the same compass than are contained in the paragraph just quoted. It proceeds on the following extraordinary assumptions; First, That all the purchasers of hosiery are also purchasers of the other parts of the produce of the British soil, and that in the same proportion. For if this is not the case; if they either do not purchase the other parts of our produce at all, or not in the same proportion, how will it follow that they must necessarily buy just so much *less* of our corn, and of every other article which the land produces, because they buy *more* of our hosiery? Look at foreign nations: our stockings make their way into a large proportion of the habitable world; but are all the inhabitants of the regions into which they penetrate accustomed to purchase equal proportions of the other branches of our rude produce? The far greater part, it is well known, purchase none of these, and few, if any, in the same proportion.

Secondly, It assumes for granted, that all who purchase hosiery expend to the *utmost extent of their income*, so that, if they give five shillings a year *more* for hosiery, they must necessarily lay out five shillings *less* in other articles of consumption. "They have, it seems, just *so much* that they can lay out upon stockings."* It must be evident to the intelligent reader that this mode of reasoning presupposes an exact equality of expenditure and of income, and that, consequently, it is applicable only to such whose circumstances oblige them to practise in every instance the strictest and most rigid economy. But the chief purchases of manufacture are made by consumers of a very different description; by persons whose situation enables them to sustain a much greater advance of price than is here mentioned, without the

* Cobbett, p. 90.

necessity of abridging themselves in other modes of indulgence. If Mr. Cobbett's reasoning were just, the demand for every article, at distinct periods, would be exactly proportioned to its price; but experience shows the contrary, that the demand is not regulated solely by the price, but by many other concurrent causes, which it is needless at present to specify. He forgets the "eaters of taxes," the nobility, the gentry, the landed proprietors, the opulent merchants, the thriving tradesmen, together with the myriads of others, who are in easy circumstances and live within their income, all of whom wear stockings, and can well afford an advance of a few shillings on that head, without a proportional diminution in every other branch of expenditure. Though this class of the community may not be the most numerous, it cannot be doubted that they are the chief purchasers of manufacture.

Thirdly, His argument goes upon the supposition, that it is of no consequence to the public *where* wealth is deposited, provided it is not "thrown into the sea." Admitting the truth of this, how can the taxes be the cause of our calamities, as he asserts, "by taking from those who labour, and giving to those who do not labour?"* and how unreasonable and absurd his violent outcry against the landholders, pensioners, and sinecurists! To the accumulation of wealth in *their* hands he attributes all our distresses, who yet are as little disposed, we presume, as any men, "to throw it into the sea."

May they not retort upon him, and say, "You ascribe the ruin of the nation to the transfer of its wealth into the hands of those who do not labour from those who do. But our money is employed either in loans or in consumption. The capital we lend is employed by merchants and manufacturers, in maintaining productive labour, while the money we consume tends, immediately, by taking off the produce, to keep up the value of land; and it is certain, considered under either mode of operation, that, were it transferred to others, we, its present

* Cobbett, p. 92.

possessors, should have so much *less* to employ or to spend?" I am far from supposing this reasoning would be correct; but I have no hesitation in affirming it is the legitimate consequence of his principle, which is, that the landed proprietor would not be benefited by the improved condition of the working classes, nor injured even by the extinction of wages, unless "they were thrown into the sea." The operative part of the people, those, we mean, who are immediately employed in productive labour, probably compose much less than a moiety of the whole nation: the remaining part of the population must, as far as the present argument is concerned, be classed with those who *do not labour*. Suppose the wages of the stocking weavers were universally depressed, so as to be totally inadequate to their support, which was actually the case before the late regulations; in consequence of the competition among the manufacturers, a correspondent abatement in the price of the article would be the necessary consequence; hosiery would be just so much the cheaper, and the deduction from the wages, being subtracted from the price, would be in fact given to the purchasers. A very large proportion of these, however, consist of such as *do not labour*. Here then we have an example of the transfer of property from "those who do, to those who do not labour," which Mr. Cobbett represents as the root and origin of all our evils; yet strange to tell, this same writer affirms that the process by which this is effected is productive of no injury to the public. A portion of the wages withheld would, in consequence of the abatement of price pass into the hands even of the placemen, pensioners, and sinecurists themselves. Let me ask whether this would not, on his own principles, be a direct transfer of so much money from those "who labour to those who do not?" yet is he guilty of the absurdity of saying, that an arrangement which he asserts to be so destructive to the whole nation in every other instance, would in this produce no inconvenience whatever, either to the public, or to the landed proprietor.

The reader is probably by this time weary of attend-

ing to the palpable contradictions of this arrogant and superficial declaimer: suffice it to remark that it requires little or no penetration to perceive that the extinction of wages, and the consequent absolute pauperism of the working classes, would effect the deepest depression of the value of land in every manufacturing district; and that no remedy would be found in the decreased price of the article, since the saving arising from it would be reaped, not by the landholder, but by the public, in minute and almost invisible portions, through all its diversity of ranks, and by foreign nations.

Mr. Cobbett, with much confidence and equal exultation, predicts the destruction of the landed interest as the certain, the inevitable consequence of the present crisis. Whatever probability may attach to these dismal forebodings, arises chiefly, if not wholly, from the alarming increase of poor rates, and this latter from the inadequate remuneration of labour. For what is it else, except in time of sickness, which drives a poor man to have recourse to parish relief? Were the rate of wages sufficient to procure, with facility, the means of human subsistence, is it possible to doubt that the parochial burdens would be most essentially alleviated, that the farmer and householder would find it much easier to pay the ordinary rent? The ingenuity of Mr. Cobbett, however, has enabled him to discover that, were a million a year added to the wages of labour, the landed proprietor would not derive the advantage of a farthing.

These, and such like extravagancies, will be quite sufficient to satisfy the reader, that he is a popular declaimer, not a philosopher; a firebrand, not a luminary. He emits fire and smoke in abundance, like a volcano, but the whole effect is to desolate, not to enlighten. His principal artifice consists in the exhibition of a few specious and bold generalities, which he illustrates and confirms by a few prominent facts, culled for his purpose, without the slightest attempt at that patient induction and inquiry, which alone lead to solid and useful results. Shrewd, intemperate, presumptuous, careless of the truth of his representations, and indifferent to their consequences, provided they make an impression, he is well qualified, it must be confessed, by his faults no less than his talents, by his inflammatory style and incendiary spirit, for the office he assumes, to scatter delusion, to excite insurrection, the Polyphemus of the Mob, "the one-eyed monarch of the blind." His strictures, however, on the topic under consideration are pregnant with instruction it was not his design to communicate. Whatever the inhabitants of this county may think of the Frame-work Knitters' Union, *he* plainly foresees in the consequences of its failure, the materials of ferocious delight; he sees, without the aid of inspiration, an inundation of miseries to follow, paupers crowding by thousands to the doors of overseers, parishes dismayed and perplexed, the poor clamouring for bread which cannot be given them, and rushing upon the point of the bayonet to avoid a more cruel and lingering death; the commencement of that tempest, in a word, which he boasts having crossed the Atlantic to witness, which is to shake all that is stable, to prostrate all that is great, and to accumulate a pile for the elevation of future demagogues.

Rome trembled when Cataline rejoiced. Let the friends of peace and order then, let the landed proprietor especially, take warning; they stand upon the brink of a precipice, from which, if they suffer themselves to be precipitated, it will be no small aggravation of their calamity to perceive the ease with which it might have been prevented; together with the contemptible agency, and the flimsy sophistry, which accelerated their overthrow. If it is some consolation to the fallen to have perished by a noble hand, the indignity of being baffled and deluded by the author of the Political Register, must be more humiliating than words can express.

Having extended these strictures beyond my original design, and exhausted, it is to be feared, the patience of my readers, it is my intention to detain them no longer than while I notice an objection to the *Union*, more plausible than any of the preceding, though for the reasons which follow, entirely destitute of solidity.

It is alleged by its opponents, that the provision of a Fund for the support of such as are out of employ, affords a direct encouragement to idleness, the most baleful habit a poor man can contract. This objection, could it be sustained, would undoubtedly be weighty; whether it can or not, must depend upon the previous question, Will the number out of employ be *permanently* greater if the *statement* continues, than on the contrary supposition? That it may have that effect for a short time, we are not disposed to deny: the manufacturers having suspended their operations to a considerable degree, some hoping for the dissolution of the Society, others from an apprehension of that event, it is probable the moment it were announced, all hands would be set to work. A spirit of vigour and activity would seem for a moment to pervade the trade. But look a step or two further. The number employed in manufacturing, the strained exertions they would be necessitated to make to compensate for the lowness of their wages, and the deteriorated state of the article, would combine to produce a glut, which re-acting both in the wages and the price, would eventually, and at no great distance neither, produce a greater surplus of labour than exists at present. As my opinion on such a subject may be deemed of little value, I must be allowed to add, that it perfectly coincides with that of the most intelligent men in the trade, and is strongly corroborated by the fact, that there were as many out of work at the time when wages were the most depressed, as at other seasons. Many of them wrought sixteen instead of twelve hours a day; the fabric produced was also of a deteriorated quality, incapable of being vended in foreign markets, insomuch that, I am credibly informed that in different parts of Europe, in Germany particularly, its being known to be *British* is a sufficient reason for refusing it. The demand for labour then, there is every reason to believe, would not be permanently augmented by returning to the former system, and consequently the number out of employ not diminished. For reasons already specified, it is almost certain the reverse would be the case, and the surplus labour keep pace with the redundant superfluity of manufacture.

The project of raising it by lowering wages has been tried, and found unavailing; and whatever attempts are made to renew it, will resemble the labour of Sisyphus; it will be rolling a stone which will for ever fall back.

The sum proposed to be paid from the Fund to such as are out of work, is, at the most, six shillings and sixpence a week, sufficient indeed to preserve them from lying utterly at the mercy of their masters, but certainly not such as to render their situation attractive, nor greater than the parishes would be under the necessity of paying shortly to a much greater number, were the Society abolished. While it provides a remedy for the existing evils, it leaves sufficient inducement to seek out other channels for their industry, whenever the state of society shall afford them.

We are far from contending that the system which it is our object to recommend is one of unmingled perfection, productive of good only, without the least alloy; for such is not the condition of human institutions, or of human affairs. The possibility of perversion and abuse inseparably adheres to every conceivable plan for ameliorating the condition of mankind; and he who refuses his approbation to every thing short of perfection, must stand still in hopeless inactivity and despair. If it has been shown that the plan adopted in Leicestershire provides the only remedy for an evil which is progressive and intolerable, that the inconveniences attending it bear no proportion to its advantages, and, above all, that the principal objections urged by its opponents will apply with equal force to every other mode of proceeding, and most of all to that which *they* recommend, every reasonable demand is satisfied. Whether this has been accomplished or not, must be left to the decision of an enlightened public; nor let it be deemed presumptuous to say, that if such had not been the firm persuasion of the author, these pages had not appeared.

If he should be thought to have treated Mr. Cobbett with too much severity, he wishes it to be clearly understood that his censure is in no degree founded on the professed attachment of that writer to the cause of re

form. Educated in the principles of Mr. Fox, and in those of the earliest and best days of Mr. Pitt, to which advancing years and experience have increased his attachment, it is impossible he should entertain a doubt that an important reform in our representation is essentially connected with the freedom, the glory, and the happiness of the British empire. But he sees in Mr. Cobbett, what the intelligent part of the public will at once discern, a design to push the industrious classes of the community to despair, and to aggravate their distresses, in order to accelerate the catastrophe he contemplates; whether it involves the preservation of the constitution, or a total subversion of the existing order of things, must be left to the judgement of the reader. On the most favourable supposition, "to do evil that good may come," to wish to see the industrious part of the population couched under a supernumerary weight, that they may become instrumental in effecting some great and undefined revolution in public affairs, is a policy which he shall ever detest; nor can he sufficiently deprecate the infusion of political venom into the discussions which the present *Union* has produced.

Let those who, from interested motives, or from motives of a still worse description, concur with Mr. Cobbett in vilifying and exploding the present plan, propose something better, unless they are determined to exemplify that malignant potency of evil by which "one sinner destroys much good." It is surely not too much to demand, before they proceed to dilapidate the only asylum offered to the industrious mechanic, that, instead of exposing him houseless and shivering to the inclement blast, they should provide some better accommodation in its room. Other expedients have been devised: a large subscription was raised, and many thousands advanced in Nottinghamshire, with a view to employ the indigent frame-work knitters, in public works. But the scheme, as might have been foreseen, proved abortive. The exertion could not be continued, a succession of public works is not easily found; and after alleviating the distress of a single winter, every thing returned back to its former channel. A similar

plan, the writer is informed, is in contemplation for this county, and, as far as it is adopted to relieve the pressure of the Fund, we shall rejoice in its success; but, if it is intended to supersede it, or to withdraw that support which the difficulties attending an infant institution may demand, it will, in my humble opinion, be unspeakably injurious. That it will produce no permanent relief to the existing distress, is evident from the example of Nottingham; and, however praiseworthy the motives of its projectors, it is but the part of candour to warn the workmen and the parishes, that if their dependence upon it tempts them to relax their present exertions, they will discover, when it is too late, that they have lost the substance by grasping at a shadow. The evil required to be remedied originates in permanent causes, such as will mock the operation of all temporary expedients.

With respect to the apprehension which some have professed to entertain, of the removal of the manufacture to the neighbouring counties, or to some distant part of the kingdom, little requires to be said. Man is the same in every county, and the energy which has been displayed by the Leicestershire weavers will, there is no doubt, be successfully imitated elsewhere, and produce the same results. In Nottinghamshire we are happy to find, from the latest intelligence, that the most numerous and respectable part of the hosiers have already acceded to the *statement*, and little doubt is entertained of the speedy concurrence of the rest. This apprehension, therefore, if there ever was any ground for it, the event has dispelled. Had it been otherwise, are the operative classes in this department to starve, or reduce to ruin every other description, by ineffectual efforts to support them, in the contemplation of a remote contingency, and for the sake of securing a manufacture, which, upon such terms, can only be considered as an epidemic disease, an imposthume, a source of misery to all who are employed in it, and of embarrassment and distress to the whole community? The competition for such a manufacture is a competition for ruin.

Before I conclude, let me be permitted to remind the

reader that there is such a sin as oppression; that it consists not in that gross violation of justice which is cognizable by law, and against which the wisdom of all civilized nations has provided; but in taking such an advantage of the weakness and necessity of the poor as converts them into mere instruments of a superior power, the victims of selfish emolument, with no other consideration than how far their physical exertions may be rendered subservient to the gratification of an unfeeling rapacity. He is the oppressor who is not restrained by the dictates of humanity from pushing, to its utmost extent, the natural superiority which riches every where possess over poverty; and the stratagems by which this may be effected are too numerous and too subtle to fall within the cognizance of any earthly tribunal. When the Scripture denounces, with such awful severity, the doom of such as "withhold their hire from those who reaped the field," we must not suppose it refers so much to a violation of compact, an offence which the laws of no civilized country would permit, as to the *inadequacy* of the recompense itself. In the eye of heaven, wages may justly be said to be *withheld* from the labourer, when they are totally inadequate to his subsistence, and such as nothing but helpless indigence could induce him to accept. Instead of inquiring how much of this species of guilt may be justly chargeable on a certain class of manufacturers in this town and county, which would only suggest matter for irritating reflection and fruitless recriminations, let us rather rejoice that a new scene has opened, and a plan been adopted, which, we trust, will cut off the opportunity from the bad, and the temptation from the good, of renewing a system which should be consigned to eternal oblivion.* In this view, we have no hesitation in asserting, that the perpetuity of the Friendly Society is intimately connected with the interest of both worlds, since it is no less the dictate of humanity and of justice, than of sound policy.

* See "Letters to Buxton," published by Longman and Co., which breathe throughout the eloquence of the heart, and in which the cause of humanity is pleaded, and the sufferings of the industrious classes painted with a pathos it is impossible to resist.

AN ADDRESS

ON

THE STATE OF SLAVERY

IN THE

WEST INDIA ISLANDS,

FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

[PUBLISHED IN 1824.]

PROCEEDINGS.

At a Meeting of persons, inhabitants of the Town of Leicester and its Vicinity, held the 17th of December, 1823,

THOMAS BABINGTON, Esq. in the Chair;

Resolved,

1. That the individuals composing the present Meeting are deeply impressed with the conviction that the state of Slavery is repugnant to justice, humanity, and sound policy, to the principles of the British constitution, and to the spirit of the Christian religion; and that they cannot consider the legal perpetuation of Slavery, in principle, more defensive than the Slave Trade itself.

2. That they call to mind, with sorrow and shame, that there are eight hundred thousand persons in a state of personal Slavery in the Colonies of Great Britain, deprived of those civil privileges and religious advantages to which, as our fellow-subjects, they are entitled.

3. That, although a hope was long indulged, that the Abolition of the Slave Trade would have produced most beneficial consequences to the Slave population in the Colonies, no effectual steps have been taken, during the sixteen years which have elapsed since that event, for mitigating in

any material degree the evils of Negro bondage, or for putting an end to a system which outrages every feeling of humanity.

4. That the House of Commons having, during the last Session of Parliament, unanimously passed the following resolutions, viz.

> "1. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the Slave population in his Majesty's Colonies;
>
> "2. That, through a determined and persevering, but judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the Slave population; such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects;
>
> "3. That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose at the earliest period that may be compatible with the well-being of the Slaves, the safety of the Colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the state of property therein;"

the individuals present feel themselves called upon to promote these objects to the utmost of their power, by all prudent and lawful means.

5. That for this purpose, a Society be now formed in Leicester and its vicinity, as an Auxiliary to the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions.

6. That subscriptions be received by the Treasurer, at the Bank of Messrs. Mansfield and Co. and by the Secretary; and that all persons subscribing annually to the Society be Members of it, and be entitled to attend and vote at all General Meetings.

7. That all persons subscribing ten shillings or upwards yearly, or five pounds at one time, be Governors of the Society.

8. That the business of the Society be conducted by a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and a Committee, consisting of not less than fifteen Governors, and that five constitute a quorum; and that the President, Treasurer, and Secretary be, ex officio, members of the Committee.

9. That the Committee meet once every two months, and at such other times as they may fix, and call General Meetings of the Subscribers when they shall judge it requisite; and that any five members of it be authorized to direct the Secretary to summon a Special Meeting of the Committee giving three days' notice thereof.

OFFICERS

OF THE

LEICESTER AUXILIARY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

President.

THOMAS BABINGTON, Esq.

Treasurer.

MATTHEW BABINGTON, Esq.

Secratary.

Mr. THOMAS BURGESS.

Committee.

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Rev. G. B. Mitchell.
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Rev. E. H. Hoare.
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Mr. John Ellis.
Mr. Joseph Nunneley.
Mr. Frederick Bankart.
Mr. George Lockwood.
Mr. James Cort.
Mr. John Yates.

ADDRESS

That slavery is the most deplorable condition to which human nature can be reduced, is too evident to require the labour of proof. By subjecting one human creature to the absolute control of another, it annihilates the most essential prerogative of a reasonable being, which consists in the power of determining his own actions in every instance in which they are not injurious to others. The right improvement of this prerogative is the source of all the virtue and happiness of which the human race is susceptible. Slavery introduces the most horrible confusion, since it degrades human beings from the denomination of persons to that of things; and by merging the interests of the slave in those of the master, he becomes a mere appendage to the existence of another, instead of preserving the dignity which belongs to a reasonable and accountable nature. Knowledge and virtue are foreign to his state; ignorance the most gross, and dispositions the most depraved, are requisite to reduce him to a level with his condition.

But degrading as slavery is, in its mildest form, that species of it which prevails in our West India colonies*

* The following authorized summary of the number of slaves in the British Colonies, in June 1830, may be interesting to some readers.
Antigua, 29,839. Bahama Isles, 10,841. Barbadoes, 81,902. Berbice, 21,319. Bermuda, 4,608. Cape of Good Hope, 35,509. Demerara and Essequibo, 69,467. Dominica, 15,392. Grenada, 24,342. Jamaica, 331,119. Mauritius, 76,774. Montserrat, 6,262. Nevis, 9,259. St. Christopher's, 19,310. St. Lucia, 13,661. St. Vincent, 23,589. Tobago, 12,723. Trinidad, 24,452. Virgin Islands, 5,436.
Total number of Slaves in the British Colonies, 815,804.
Free Blacks in the British Colonies, about 51,000.

is of the very worst description, far less tolerable than that which subsisted in Greece and Rome during the reign of paganism. It would be difficult to find a parallel to it in any age or nation, with the exception of those unhappy persons who are carried captive by the piratical states of Barbary. Scourged, branded, and sold at the discretion of their masters, the slaves in our West India islands are doomed to a life of incessant toil for the benefit of those from whom they receive no recompense whatever: they are indebted for their principal subsistence to the cultivation of small portions of land allotted them under the name of provision grounds: and the only time ordinarily allowed for that purpose is the day which the laws of all christian states have devoted to rest. On that day, instead of being assembled to listen to the oracles of God, and to imbibe the consolations of piety, they are necessitated to work for their living, and to dispose of the produce of their labour at the public market; the natural consequence is, that the far greater part of them are as ignorant of the first principles of christianity as though they had remained in the land of their forefathers.*

The Slave population of the United States in America, in 1830, amounted to 2,010,436; being increased threefold since the year 1790! This is an anomalous result, with which those in Great Britain who admire America, her free institutions, and her missionary spirit, are exceedingly perplexed. Ed.

* Since the first edition of this volume was published, a very important *official* document has been promulgated in reference to the duty and the consequences of instructing our West India slaves in the principles of the christian religion.

A most extensive and alarming insurrection among the slave population in Jamaica, having occurred at the very beginning of the present year, 1832, an insurrection which many influential men, and some public functionaries in that island, imputed (very erroneously, as has since been legally proved) to the instructions of christian missionaries of different persuasions; the present enlightened government of this country,—whose views in these respects are more correct, so far as public documents make them known, than those of any of their predecessors, at least during the current century,—authorized, under the direction of the King in Council, a "Despatch from Viscount Goderich to the Earl of Belmore," governor of Jamaica, dated March 1. As some of the principles developed in that paper are too valuable to be permitted to slide from the columns of a newspaper into oblivion, I shall transfer a few passages into this note.

They are driven to the field by the cart whip. They are followed by a driver, with this dreadful instrument

"The documents which your lordship has transmitted ascribe the recent commotions, not merely to the erroneous belief amongst the slaves that some law had set them free, but to the influence of religious instruction, communicated by ignorant teachers, received by a population unprepared by any previous education to apprehend the real spirit of christianity."

"Amongst those who acknowledge the divine authority of our national faith, there is no room for controversy respecting the duty of imparting the knowledge of christianity to all mankind, and especially to our more immediate dependents. However the modes or seasons of instruction may be regulated according to the various circumstances of different classes of society, nothing can justify the systematically withholding from any man, or class of men, a revelation given for the common benefit of all. I could not therefore acknowledge that the slaves in Jamaica could be permitted to live and die amidst the darkness of heathen idolatry, whatever effect the advancing light of christianity might ultimately have upon the relation of master and slave; nor am I anxious to conceal my opinion, that a change in this relation is the natural tendency, and must be the ultimate result, of the diffusion of religious knowledge amongst them. For although the great moral virtues of contentment and universal benevolence may be expected to appear amongst a christian slave population, as the legitimate fruit of christian principles, yet all probability justifies the belief, and all experience attests the fact, that the increased range of thought, the new habits of reflection, and the more lively perception of the duties owing by their fellow-christians to themselves, to which the converted slaves will attain, will gradually produce in their minds new feelings respecting their servile condition. It is also worth while to reflect on the inevitable tendencies of the laws for the abolition of the slave trade. So long as the islands were peopled by the importation of native Africans, who lived and died in heathenism, the relation of master and slave might be expected to be permanent: but now that an indigenous race of men has grown up, speaking our own language, and instructed in our religion, all the more harsh rights of the owner, and the blind submission of the slave, will inevitably, at some period more or less remote, come to an end. Deeply impressed with this conviction, his Majesty's government have endeavoured to make timely preparation for a change, which they believe could not be made abruptly without desolation and general ruin; and the calamity which we have at present to deplore is but an additional proof of the necessity of acting on so delicate a subject with this provident foresight, and of repressing those unhappy heats and prejudices which have so long obstructed the advance of the indispensable improvements, both of the law and of the state of slavery.

"I am not disposed to deny that the work of religious instruction may in some instances have been undertaken by men ill qualified for so arduous a task; and I am even ready, for the sake of argument, to adopt the improbable supposition that the pure truths of christianity may occasionally have been adulterated by instructions of a seditious

constantly in his hand, with which he is empowered to inflict, at his own discretion, a certain number of lashes

nature. Assume all this to be the case, and what is the proper inference? Not, assuredly, that the slaves be left to their native superstitions and idolatry, but that renewed exertions should be unremittingly made to diffuse amongst them more just apprehensions of religion, and clearer views of those moral obligations, to the enforcement of which all christian instruction should be subservient. Guided by these considerations, the government of this country proposed, and the two Houses of Parliament sanctioned, the enlargement of the church establishment in the West Indies on a liberal basis; and, in times of no common financial difficulties, that charge has been cheerfully sustained by the people of this kingdom. Under the influence of the same views many individuals owning property in Jamaica have subjected themselves to a large annual expenditure, to afford religious instruction to their slaves by clergymen of the established church, and, with a zeal worthy of all praise, have even undertaken the entire charge of missions to their own estates. In a similar spirit the religious societies connected with the church of England have devoted much of their funds, and directed the labours of many of their Missionaries, to the same field of exertion; and I cannot but indulge the hope, that by adapting her discipline to this new and peculiar state of society, and by inculcating among the slaves those sound views of christian truth and practice which she habitually recognizes, the church of England will confer upon our West India Colonies the inestimable benefit of such religious instruction as may at once satisfy the zeal of the most devout, and the scruples of the most cautious of the advocates for the conversion of slaves.

"It is not, however, merely to a misconception of religious truth, but to the direct instigation of some of the Missionaries that the recent insurrection is ascribed in some of the documents which your lordship has transmitted. I have observed with great satisfaction the efforts which you so judiciously made to guard the persons to whom it would belong to sit in judgement on the Missionaries, against the influence of religious prejudices; and I trust that the caution which you have given will effectually prevent the manifestation of any intemperate or hostile spirit towards them in any subsequent stage of the proceedings. I most distinctly avow my conviction that the improbability of the charge is so extreme, that nothing short of the most irresistible evidence could induce a belief of it. The Missionaries who engage in the office of converting the slaves in our colonies cannot, with charity, or in justice, be supposed to be actuated by any views of secular ambition or personal advantage. They devote themselves to an obscure, and arduous, and ill-requited service: they are well apprized that distrust and jealousy will attend them, and that the path they have chosen leads neither to wealth nor reputation. If, in their case, as in that of other men, motives less exclusively sacred than those which are avowed may exercise some influence on their minds, it were irrational either to feel surprise or to cherish suspicion on that account. The great ruling motive must, in general, be that which is professed, since, in general, there is no other advantage to be obtained than the con-

on their backs, with no exception whatever in favour of the softer sex. During the four or five months of their harvest they are compelled to protect their labour through half the night, or through the whole of each alternate night. They are every moment liable to be removed, at the will of their masters, to the remotest parts of the island, or to be transported into other islands. The ties of kindred are violently torn asunder, and the mother and children often assigned to different purchasers, and separated to distant parts. The ordinance of marriage is scarcely known among them; while the most unrestrained licentiousness and profligacy of manners, as well in their intercourse with each other as with the whites, is indulged and encouraged.

The practice of emancipation, which has long prevailed to a great extent, and been followed by the happiest effects in the old Spanish colonies, is discountenanced by the laws of our colonies, and loaded with such heavy fines in some of them as almost to amount to a prohibition. The design of such regulations is unquestionably to confer perpetuity on the present sys-

sciousness of having contributed to the diffusion of christianity throughout the world. To suppose men who act habitually on such a principle, either so insensible to the restraints of conscience, or so perverted in their estimate of right and wrong, as to foment insurrection and civil war for the subversion of slavery, or to believe them insensible to the extreme danger and suffering in which, by engaging in such an enterprise, they must involve those for whose benefit the contest was to be undertaken, would argue rather a heated and prejudiced mind, than a discerning judgment and a correct acquaintance with human character. When, therefore, I consider that no motive can be rationally assigned which should have induced the Missionaries to embark in so guilty and desperate an undertaking, I cannot but earnestly trust, that the trial of any of their number, who may be charged with a participation in this rebellion, may have been postponed until comparative tranquillity should have succeeded to the first panic, and that such trials may have been conducted not before a military tribunal, but with all the regular forms of law. Should any such Missionary have been convicted, and he awaiting the execution of his sentence on the arrival of this despatch, your lordship will not permit that sentence to be carried into effect, till his Majesty's pleasure can be known."

The entire despatch from which the above is quoted, may be seen in the "Jamaica Courant," of May 13, or "The Times," of June 22. —Ed.

tem, and extinguish in the breast of the negroes the faintest hope of the enjoyment of freedom.

Nothing was wanting to complete the misery of such a state, except to attach absolute impunity to the atrocities which the unlimited subjection of the weak to the strong is sure to produce; and this is amply provided for by that regulation universally adopted in our colonies, which excludes the testimony of a negro against a white inhabitant. In consequence of this law, the vilest miscreant may inflict whatever cruelties he pleases on the wretched blacks, providing he takes care that no white person be present. There are laws, it is true, which constitute the murder of a negro a capital offence, and which limit the measure of his punishment; but as if for the very purpose of rendering them nugatory and ridiculous, conviction is made to depend on a circumstance attending the perpetration of crimes, which it is most easy to exclude. Thus, in opposition to the genius of all enlightened legislation, the greatest facilities are presented to oppression—the greatest impediments thrown in the way of detection—and, in all that relates to the treatment of slaves, the voice of truth is silenced, evidence suppressed, the claims of justice studiously defeated, and the redress of the most atrocious injuries rendered next to impossible.

There is another particular in the state of the laws respecting negroes too remarkable to be passed over in silence. It is the obvious dictate of justice, and the practice of all civilized states, that, till guilt is proved, innocence shall be presumed; and that the *onus probandi*, the obligation of adducing evidence, shall rest with the accuser in the first instance. In the West India islands the reverse of this is established, and every negro, or man of colour, though free, is *presumed* to be a slave, and liable to be treated as such, unless he can furnish documentary evidence of his freedom. It is enacted that the presumption shall always be taken against him: so that if he loses his certificate of freedom, or it is stolen from him, it is at the option of any person to claim him, and replunge him into the horrors of slavery.

By this means many are daily deprived of their freedom; and the danger of incurring that calamity is daily suspended over the heads of the innocent.

It is no small aggravation of the cruelty of this system, that its unhappy victims have not been exposed to it as the punishment of crime, but by the violence of ruffians, who, having traversed the ocean in quest of human prey, forcibly tore them from their native shores, and the embraces of their dearest relatives, in order to expose them to sale in a distant quarter of the globe. The forms of judicial inquiry, the examination of witnesses, the proof of guilt, and the sentence of a judge, were not the precursors of this most dire calamity; it was the assault of brutal violence on helpless weakness and unsuspecting innocence—it was the grasp of the marauder and the assassin, hurrying away his victims, amidst shrieks of horror and the piercing accents of despair, which prepared these scenes of woe. These, and the descendants of these, are the persons who compose the black population of our islands. Their number is computed at present at 800,000; and if we direct our view to that portion of the British dominions, we behold the shocking spectacle of nearly a million of our fellow-subjects, with no other imputation than that of a darker skin, doomed to a condition which, were it assigned as the punishment of the greatest guilt, would be accused of immoderate severity. We behold these children of nature, for the purpose chiefly of supplying us with the ingredient which sweetens our repasts, compelled by men, who call themselves christians, to exhaust to its dregs a more bitter cup than is usually allotted to the greatest adepts in crime.

It is confidently asserted by advocates of slavery, that the situation of the negroes in our islands is preferable to that of the labouring classes in England. But the falsehood of this assertion is sufficiently proved by the numerous elopements which take place there; on referring to a very recent Jamaica paper, we observe a list of more than a hundred runaway slaves; so that, admitting this to be a fair specimen of what usually occurs, the

number of slaves who attempt to escape from their masters in one island only, amounts annually to five or six thousand. It appears that the far greater part were branded, many of them in different parts of the body, and not a few are designated by their wounds and sores, the effects of immoderate punishment. A moment's reflection must convince us, that the condition must be intolerable from which such numbers daily attempt their escape, at the hazard of tortures and of death.

We are in possession of a religion, the communication of which would afford some compensation for the injuries we have inflicted, and let in a ray of hope on the benighted mind. To say that no effectual provision has been made for this purpose, is to assert the smallest part of the truth. The religious instruction of the negroes has not only been neglected, but such regulations introduced, as renders it nearly impracticable. The attempts of this sort which have been made have not resulted from any legislative enactment, but merely from the zeal of private individuals, exposed for the most part to the utmost opposition and obloquy; nor will it admit of a doubt, that, but for the seasonable interference of the government at home, all such proceedings would long since have been suppressed. The colonial legislatures have displayed nearly as much aversion to the religious instruction of the slaves, as to the extension of their civil immunities; and, judging from their conduct, we should be tempted to infer, they were no less careful to exclude them from the hope of heaven, than from happiness on earth.

It would be natural to suppose, such a system could have few charms for the spectator, that the presence of such a mass of degradation and misery would be a source of continual annoyance, and that no exertion would be spared, by those who have it most in their power, to diminish its pressure, and lighten its horrors. On the contrary, the West India planter views it with the utmost complacency; in their eyes it seems to be a most finished and exquisite specimen of social order, a masterpiece of policy, the most precious legacy bequeathed them by their ancestors, which they are bound to maintain inviolate in every part, to defend at the greatest risk, and to transmit unimpaired to future generations. They anticipate with the utmost confidence the perpetual duration of the system, and reprobate every measure which has the remotest tendency to endanger its existence, as the offspring of indescribable folly and wickedness. To such a degree are their moral perceptions vitiated, that they really believe they have a prescriptive right to be guilty of injustice, to trample on the image of their Maker, to erase his superscription, and to treat that portion of their species which fortune has subjected to their power, as mere beasts of burden, divested of the essential characteristics of humanity. In this instance, impious speculations have been resorted to in palliation of practical enormities; nor have there been wanting those who avow their persuasion that the negro is more nearly allied to the oran outang, than to the human kind.

Hence it appears that a state of slavery is in its operation as mischievous to the master as to the slave. If its effects on the latter are more visible in his corporeal structure, in his debased physiognomy, his dejected countenance, his lacerated skin, and not unfrequently in his "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores;" its effects on the mind of the former are not less perceivable, in the most inveterate prejudice, a pride which spurns the restraints of justice, a violence which is deaf to the dictates of compassion—in a word, in a capricious and uncontrollable self-will, which lays waste all the finer sensibilities of the soul, and renders its possessor too often a rebel to his God, a torment to himself, and a terror to his fellow-creatures.

Sixteen years have now elapsed since the abolition of the slave trade,* and during this period few or none of those improvements have taken place in the treatment of slaves, which were expected to result from that mea-

* The resolution of the House of Commons for the abolition of the slave-trade passed in June, 1806.—Ed.

sure. At that time it was generally contended, that as the planters would be necessitated thenceforth to keep up the number of their slaves, without the aid of fresh importations, this itself would draw after it such an amelioration in the management of them, as would ensure the happiest results, without the legislative interference. The interest of the proprietors, it was supposed would so obviously coincide with the dictates of humanity, as to give these the force of law. It is too manifest, however, from the event, that in forming this conclusion we did not take sufficiently into account the shortsightedness of rapacity, the force of habit, the contagion of example, and the incurable propensity of human nature to abuse absolute power in whatever hands it is placed. The enormities which formerly characterized the slave system, have suffered little or no abatement; all its most odious peculiarities are retained, while, by the just retribution of Providence, the planters are reduced to the utmost embarrassment and distress.

After witnessing such an obstinate adherence to a system, equally injurious to the negroes and to themselves—after every suggestion of improvement has been indignantly rejected, and not a single effort made in behalf of the slave population, if we except a few verbal enactments, passed with no other view, it is evident from the event, than to elude inquiry and silence complaint—it would be more than vain, it would be foolish and preposterous, to look for any substantial redress from colonial legislators. *They* are the aggressors, *they* are the authors of the evils we complain of; and how can it be expected they should legislate against themselves? To leave the slaves in *their* hands, what is it less than to recommend the lamb to the protection of the wolf?

Slavery, considered as a perpetual state, is as incapable of vindication as the trade in slaves: they are integral parts of the same system, and, in point of moral estimate, must stand or fall together. If it be unjust to sell men into slavery, who are guilty of no crime, it must be equally so to retain them in that state; the last act of injustice is but the sequel and completion of the

first. If the natives of Africa were originally despoiled of their freedom, by rapine and violence, no man is entitled to avail himself of the condition to which they are reduced, by compelling them to labour for his benefit; nor is it less evident, that they could not possibly transmit the forfeiture to their children of those rights which they never forfeited for themselves. Thus it appears, that the claims of the planters to hold their negroes in perpetual bondage, is vitiated in its *origin;* and, having commenced in an act of injustice, can never acquire the sanction of right.

But here we are most anxious to guard against the misrepresentation of our sentiments. Convinced as we are that negro slavery is most iniquitous in its origin, most mischievous in its effects, and diametrically opposite to the genius of christianity, and of the British Constitution, we are yet far from proposing a sudden revolution. Universal experience shows, that in the body politic, no less than in the natural, inveterate diseases admit only of a slow and gradual cure; and we should deprecate an immediate emancipation almost as much as the planters themselves, from a full conviction that the debasing operation of slavery long continued, disqualifies its subjects for performing the functions, and enjoying the immunities of a free citizen.

Our object is, in the first place, to produce such an amelioration of their treatment, as shall soften the rigour of their bondage; and, in the next, that provision for their moral and religious instruction, which, by developing their faculties, and improving their character, may ultimately qualify them for the possession of the freedom, of which they have been cruelly deprived. With this view, we wish to see the competency of negro evidence established, as the only efficient check to wanton barbarity; the employment of rewards, as well as punishments; the instruction of the slaves in the principles of the christian religion; the uninterrupted enjoyment of the sabbath; the institution of marriage, and the inviolability of its rights firmly established; the exclusion of the cart-whip from the field of labour;

together with the repeal of that abominable law, which renders them liable to be sold in execution for the payment of their master's debts. If, in addition to these most wholesome regulations, facilities were afforded for the purchase of their freedom, similar to those which have been adopted in the old Spanish colonies, with the happiest effect, freedoms would be gradually obtained, in such proportion and in such numbers only as would perfectly consist with the security and tranquillity of the colonies. Thus a race of freemen, fitted by their constitution and their habits for the employment of a tropical climate, united with us by civil and religious ties, would rise up in the room of the present wretched victims of oppression; a race, that having a country to preserve, and rights to defend, would be a source of national strength, instead of inspiring terror and distrust.

The superiority of free labour, in point of emolument, to the labour of slaves, having been demonstrated by such an ample induction of facts that it may be safely classed with the most established maxims of political economy, the practice of gradual emancipation would be of essential benefit to the planters, and greatly augment the value of our West India possessions. Indeed, there cannot be a more cogent proof of the folly of pertinaciously adhering to the present system, than the acknowledged inability to sustain a competition with the growers of sugar in the East Indies. In order to raise the price of East India produce, so as to enable the planter in the West to keep the market, an extra duty is imposed to a large amount, and the people of England are obliged to pay upwards of two millions a year more for that article than would be necessary if a fair competition were allowed; in other words, the inhabitants of Great Britain are assessed to the amount of more than two millions annually, for no other purpose than to maintain the slave system in the West Indies; and, in opposition to the dictates of humanity, the precepts of religion, and the principles of political economy and impartial justice, we contribute more to perpetuate

our own disgrace, than it would be deemed prudent to bestow in the purchase of the greatest blessing. All our plans of domestic improvement, joined to all the efforts which we make for the diffusion of religion and virtue in foreign nations, our schools, our Bible societies, and our missions, justly considered as the peculiar glory of the age, cost us a mere scantling, compared to what is annually devoted to that very pious and benevolent object, the perpetuation of slavery in the West Indies; —we throw mites into the treasury of the sanctuary, and heap ingots on the altar of Moloch.

And why, it is natural to ask, why is it necessary to load the importation of sugar from the East Indies with such heavy duties, in order to enable the growers of the same article in an opposite quarter of the globe, at not one third the distance, to sustain a competition? Purely because the East India sugar is produced by the labour of freemen, the West India by the labour of slaves. The industry of the former is animated by hope, that of the latter depressed by despair; one is sustained by the energies of nature, the other extorted by the mechanical operation of the lash; the former labour for themselves, the latter for their masters; and such is the distinction between these two species of industry, that it more than annihilates the local difference between three or four, and twelve thousand miles. Surely the good sense of the nation will at last awake to a perception of this flagrant enormity, and express its impatience at the ignominy and injustice of such an assessment, in that firm and constitutional tone which the legislature will not despise.

Let us not be discouraged if, in this great enterprise, our attempts are not immediately crowned with success. The slave-trade, be it remembered, was long upheld by a combination of private interests, in opposition to the remonstrances of reason, humanity, and religion; but it fell at last. Such, unquestionably, will be the fate of slavery. It may, like its twin brother, be supported for a time, by that grand obstruction to all enlightened legislation, the opposition of interested individuals, who may

obscure truth by sophistry, and intimidate justice by a formidable array of influence; but it is one of the felicities of a free country that nothing can be permanent which will not sustain the ordeal of inquiry and the shock of discussion.

We indulge a hope, though the measures of administration during the last session of parliament fell far short of our wishes, that it was from a want of resolution, more than of good intention; that they have formed on the whole a correct view of the subject, and that they are not unwilling to receive that support from the expression of the public mind, which a combination of private interests renders necessary. Be this as it may, as we are always answerable for the evils which it is in our power to prevent, and some of the greatest disorders in society have been corrected by the interference of the public, through its constitutional organs, we cannot continue passive spectators of a system, which inflicts interminable degradation and misery on eight hundred thousand of our fellow-subjects, without deeply partaking of its guilt.

The scene of their suffering is distant indeed, but not so remote as to exempt them from the operation of our laws; they form an integral part of the British dominions, and woe to that nation which extends its power to those from whom it withholds its justice! That distance, which did not secure them from spoliation and captivity while in Africa, should not be allowed for a moment to intercept our attention to their welfare and commiseration of their sufferings, now that they are transported to the West Indies. Through the aid of the public voice, the government of the day carried triumphantly in 1806 the great question of the abolition of the slave-trade. Let us endeavour, by a simultaneous movement, to strengthen the hands of the present administration, if, as we hope, they are well disposed, to stimulate them if they are sluggish, and to propel them at all events in the right direction, by such a firm and unanimous display of the public sentiment and feeling on this great occasion, as no free government will think it proper

to neglect; that we may, though late, make some reparation for the accumulated injuries of ages that are past, and signalize our connexion with Africa by other characters than those of rapine, violence, and blood.

We cannot suppose for a moment that government will suffer the extraordinary conduct recently displayed by the local authorities of Jamaica, to have any influence in preventing its adoption of such measures for the amelioration of the present system, as justice and humanity may dictate. To be bearded and insulted by persons in their situation would be mortifying enough, if the ridicule attached to their proceedings did not interfere with more serious emotions. To say that government has nothing to fear from the West India islands would be scarcely correct, for we have much to fear; but it is not from their strength, but their weakness, which is such, that, were we to withdraw our support, they would fall, like ripe fruit, into the lap of the first invader. They are so much accustomed, it seems, to proceed by the method of intimidation, as to forget their absolute dependence on Great Britain for protection, as well from domestic as from foreign dangers; nor could we wish them a more cruel revenge, than to leave them to their own resources. If, by adopting such regulations as the humanity and wisdom of parliament shall prescribe, they can make it clearly appear that their pecuniary interests are affected, (which, in our opinion, will be impossible,) let them by all means receive a suitable compensation; but let us be permitted, at the same time, to express our hope that government will not be diverted from its course by the growling of a tiger, which refuses to quit its prey.

The interference, then, of an enlightened public, to circulate information, to strengthen the hands and second the movements of government, in this most just enterprise, is imperiously demanded. We cannot sit still year after year, silent spectators of the most enormous oppression exercised within the limits of the British dominions, without partaking of its guilt. We cannot remain silent and inactive, without forgetting who we

are, and what we have done; that we are the country which, after a tedious struggle with a host of prejudices arrayed in support of opulent oppression, have overthrown the slave-trade, torn it up by the roots, and branded in the eyes of all nations the sale of human flesh, as the most atrocious of social crimes. We must forget that we are the countrymen of Granville Sharpe, who, by incredible exertions, succeeded at length in purifying the British soil from its foulest pollution, and rendered it for ever impossible for a slave to breathe its air. We must sever ourselves from all alliance of spirit with a Wilberforce and a Clarkson, who looked forward to the final emancipation of the negro race as the consummation of their labours, and were sustained in their arduous contest, by the joy which that prospect inspired. We must lose sight of still more awful considerations, and forget our great Original, "who hath formed of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth."

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

COLLECTED FROM

DIFFERENT SOURCES.

FRAGMENT ON POPERY.

[WRITTEN ABOUT 1824. NOT PUBLISHED BEFORE.]

WHEN two parties, each formidable for their numbers, and the weight of their influence and property, are animated by an equal degree of zeal, it is natural to anticipate the final success of that which possesses the most inherent strength. But if one be torpid and inactive, and the other eager and enterprising,—if one reposes on its arms, while the other is incessantly on the alert,—such a difference in their spirit is sufficient to annihilate the greatest disparity of force, and to incline the balance to the side on which superior vigour is exerted. This, if I am not greatly mistaken, is pretty nearly the case at present between the protestants and the papists, as far, at least, as respects their situation in these kingdoms. The papists appear to be stimulated by zeal and elevated by hope; the protestants content themselves with being silent spectators of their progress, while many of them seem secretly to rejoice at their success. New popish chapels are rising on every side, in situations skilfully selected, with a view to attract the public attention. The consecration is announced with ostentatious publicity, and numerously attended by the most elegant and fashionable part of a protestant population, by men of opulence, merchants, and magistrates, who are seen on no other occasions beyond the precincts of the established [church.]

Judging from the practice of a multitude in the higher classes, we are necessitated to infer, that, if the popish doctrine is not true, it is innocent and harmless; and, if not entitled to an exclusive preference, it is only

inferior to that particular form of the protestant worship which they have adopted; and that, while they decline submission to its claims, it possesses a majesty which entitles it to their occasional homage and veneration. The honest fervour of indignation with which its pretensions were repelled and its impiety resented, has disappeared: popery is now viewed by the greater part of the people with careless indifference or secret complacency.

But popery, it is alleged, is changed; its venom is exhaled; and, however erroneous in a speculative view, it is no longer fraught with the mischief and the danger which rendered it so formidable to our ancestors. *An infallible religion changed*, is nearly a contradiction in terms. A religion which is founded on the assumption of a supernatural exemption from error, on the part of its adherents, may be confuted by argument, suppressed by force, or relinquished from conviction; but it is impossible to conceive of its susceptibility of change. If it undergoes any alteration, it can only [be] in consequence of its professors renouncing some one or more of the doctrines which formerly characterised it. But those doctrines are neither more nor less than the recorded division of the church, of a church affirmed by all catholics to be infallible. The supposed infallibility of the church is the corner-stone of the whole system of popery, the centre of union amidst all the animosities and disputes which may subsist on minor subjects; and the proper definition of a catholic is one who professes to maintain the absolute infallibility of a certain community styling itself the church. For a person to dissent from a single decision of the church, is to confess himself not a catholic; because it is to affirm not only that the church may err, but that it actually has erred, and is therefore, not infallible. An infallibility, extending to some points of religious belief, and not to others, is a ridiculous chimera, which, could it be reduced to an object of conception, would subvert every rational ground of confidence: for what assurance can we have, that a community which has erred once will not fall into the

same predicament again? Positive qualities may be conceived to subsist under [all] possible degrees of magnitude; they are susceptible, to an unlimited extent, of *more* or *less:* but infallibility is a negative idea, which admits of no degrees. Detect the smallest error in the individual, or the community, which makes this pretension, and you as effectually destroy it as by the discovery of a million. If a catholic, then, professes to have changed his opinions, on any subject on which the authority of the church has been interposed, so as to dissent from its decisions, he has relinquished catholicism, and renounced the only principle which distinguished him.

The supposed dominion over the consciences of men, assumed by the Roman pontiff, is sanctioned by the decision of general councils, and incorporated with their most solemn and public acts, and must consequently be allowed to constitute one of the fundamental tenets of the papal system; and, though that usurpation, considered in itself, would be a mere enunciation of a doctrine which might be rejected with impunity, the interference of the civil magistrate, to enforce the papal claims, was countenanced and demanded by the same authority. Beyond the narrow precincts of their temporal domain, the bishops of Rome were incapable of personally carrying their persecuting edicts into force; but princes and magistrates were diligently instructed that it was their indispensable duty to suppress and punish the heretics against whom the church had denounced its anathemas. Ecclesiastics, affecting a peculiar horror of blood, declined the office of executioners, which they devolved on the temporal authorities in each state; but it is equally certain, that, in the violences which [civil magistrates] committed in the suppression of heresy, and the support of the authority of the church, they acted not merely agreeably to her wishes, but in obedience to her dictates. If there was any difference, in this respect, between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers, it was, that princes could, with great difficulty, on many occasions, be induced to keep [pace] with the prompt

and unrelenting fury of their spiritual directors. The grand lesson in which they [were] indoctrinated, with infinitely more care than any other, was the implicit obedience which they vowed to the pontiff and the church, in the enactment and execution of penal laws against the abettors of heretical opinions; an epithet bestowed upon all opinions not in accordance with the tenets of the papal community. When John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, was arrested, cast into prison, and publicly burnt alive at Constance, in spite of a "safe-conduct" given him by the Emperor Sigismund, merely because he refused to belie his conscience by abjuring his pretended heresy; all was executed under the eyes, and by the express authority, of the council, who solemnly decreed that the safe-conduct of the emperor ought to be considered as no impediment to the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but, notwithstanding, that it was perfectly competent for the ecclesiastical judge to take cognizance of his errors, and to *punish* them agreeable to the dictates of justice, although he presented himself before them in dependence upon that protection but for which he would have declined appearing. Nor were they satisfied with this impious decision [alone.] Because murmurs were heard, on account of the violation of a legal protection, they had the audacity to add, that, since the said John Huss had, by impugning the orthodox faith, forfeited every privilege, and since no promise or faith was binding, either by human or divine right, in prejudice of the catholic faith, the said emperor had done as became his royal majesty in violating his "safe-conduct," and that whoever, of any rank or sex, dares to impugn the justice of the holy council, or of his majesty, in relation to their proceedings with John Huss, shall be punished, without hope of pardon, as a favourer of heretical pravity, and guilty of the crime of high treason.*

* Though I have nearly translated the language of the holy council, as given by L'Enfant in his History of the Council of Constance, the reader will probably not be displeased to see the original.

Here, then, we have the decision of a general council, that a dissent from the catholic faith, persisted in, exposes the offender to the forfeiture of all his rights, not excepting such as he may claim from express solemn stipulations. If there ever was an assembly fairly entitled to the epithet of œcumenical, or universal, it was certainly the Council of Constance; composed of delegates from every kingdom and country of Europe; held in the presence of an emperor, and many other sovereign

"Præsens sancta synodus ex quovis salvo-conductu per imperatorem, reges, et alios seculi principes hæreticis vel de hæresi diffamatis, putantes eosdem sic à suis erroribus revocare, quocunque vinculo se adstrinxerint, concesso nullum fidei catholicæ vel jurisdictioni ecclesiasticæ præjudicium generari, vel impedimentum præstari posse seu debere, declarat; quominus salvo dicto conductu nonobstante, liceat judici competenti ecclesiastico de ejusmodi personarum erroribus inquirere, et aliàs contra eas debite procedere, easdemque punire, quantum justitia suadebit, si suos pertinaciter recusaverint revocare errores etiamsi de salvo-conductu confisi ad locum venerint judicii, aliàs non venturi.

"Quo statuto, sive ordinatione lecto, idem statutum fuit approbatum per dictos dominos, episcopos nomine quatuor nationum, ac Reverendissimum Patrem Dominum Cardinalem Vivariensem, nomine Collegii Cardinalium, per verbum, *Placet*.

"DE SALVO-CONDUCTU HUSSONIS.

"Sacrosancta, &c. Quia nonnulli nimis intelligentes aut sinistræ intentionis, vel forsan solentes sapere plus quàm oportet, nedum regiæ majestati, sed etiam sacro, ut fertur, concilio, linguis maledictis detrahunt publicè et occulte dicentes, vel innuentes, quod salvus-conductus per inviotissimum principem Dominum Sigismundum Romanorum et Ungariæ, &c., Regem, quondam Johanni Hus, heresiarchæ damnatæ memoriæ datus, fuit contra justitiam aut honestatem indebitè violatus: cumtamen dictus Johannes Hus, fidem orthodoxam pertinaciter impugnans se ob omni conductu et privilegio reddiderit alienum, nec aliqua sibi fides aut promissio, de jure naturali, divino, vel humano, fuerit in præjudicium Catholicæ fidei observanda: idcirco dicta sancta synodus præsentium tenore declarat: dictum invictissimum principem circa prædictum quondam Johannem Hus, nonobstante memorato salvo-conductu, ex juris debito fecisse quod licuit, et quod decuit regiam majestatem: statuens et ordinans omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus, cujuscunque dignitatis, gradus, præeminentiæ, conditionis, status, aut sexus existant, quod nullus deinceps sacro concilio aut regiæ majesti de gestis circa prædictum quondam Johannem Hus detrahat sive quomodolibet obloquatur. Qui verò contrarium fecerit, tamquam fautor hereticæ pravitatis et reus criminis læsæ majestatis irremissibiliter puniatur."—*L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance*, vol. ii. p. 491, English edit. 1730.

princes; called by the order of a pope, and signalized by the absolute deposition of two pontiffs, a forced abdication of a third, and a creation of a fourth; which extinguished a schism of forty years, and reunited the obedience of Christendom under one head. If the boasted infallibility of the church is to be found anywhere, it is undoubtedly in the acts and decrees of such an assembly.

Nor is it easy to conceive of any thing more absurd than the supposition, that it was guided by inspiration in respect to some of its decisions, and not of others. Such a partial and capricious inspiration would completely frustrate the purpose for which it was introduced, and expose us to all the perplexity and uncertainty which it was designed to prevent; since, on this supposition, nothing short of another inspiration could enable us to distinguish and select the suggestions of the first.

I am aware that, when catholics are pressed with the consequences resulting from the pretended infallibility of general councils, summoned by the authority of the pope, they take refuge in the subtle and slippery distinction between the doctrines which are, and those which are not, points of faith. Thus, in the present instance, to serve a turn, they will probably assert, or insinuate, that, although the most cruel intolerance has obtained the sanction and support of general councils, their *proper* infallibility is not impaired, because the principle which authorizes persecution is not a *point of faith.*

Without entering into the mazes of a frivolous and unintelligible dispute about words, it is sufficient to remark, that the supernatural and infallible guidance of a church, which leaves it to stumble on the threshold of morality, to confound the essential distinctions of right and wrong, to recommend the violation of the most solemn compacts, and the murder of men against whom not a shadow of criminality is alleged, except a dissent from its dogmas, is nothing worth; but must ever ensure the ridicule and abhorrence of those who judge the tree by its fruits, and who will not be easily persuaded, that the eternal fountain of love and purity inhabits the breast

which "breathes out cruelty and slaughter." If persecution for conscience sake is contrary to the principles of justice and the genius of christianity; then, I say, this holy and infallible church was so abandoned of God, as to be permitted to legitimate the foulest crimes,—to substitute murders for sacrifice, and to betray a total ignorance of the precepts and spirit of the religion which she professed to support; and whether the Holy Ghost condescended, at the same moment, to illuminate one hemisphere of hearts so hardened and minds so darkened, may be safely left to the judgement of common sense.*

It would give us unfeigned pleasure to find, that the catholics have, in good earnest, renounced the intolerant principles of their predecessors; but when we look around for some proof of this, we see nothing that is satisfactory. In the midst of much courtesy, much urbanity, and address, we meet with nothing that partakes of the nature of solid concession;—no steps retraced, no errors revoked, no protest opposed to the persecuting maxims of former times. Whatever breathes an air of liberality, issues from the unofficial communications of private individuals. We anxiously wish for some important concessions at the fountain-head,—some exposition of the catholic faith from the supreme pontiff, or his accredited agents, calculated to satisfy us that intolerance is at last expunged from the papal creed. We wish, but we wish in vain. On the contrary, we perceive, in the restoration of the jesuits,—in the total suppression (as far as his [the pope's] influence extends) of Bible societies,—in his opposition to the toleration established in Belgium,—in the exclusion of the protestant religion from Spain and Portugal, at the very moment they were indebted for their existence to the arms of protestants,—decisive evidence of a determina-

* Shortly after the execution of Huss, a letter, written to the council, in the name of the Holy Ghost, was found at the gates of some of the churches at Constance, to this effect: "The Holy Spirit to the Council of Constance, greeting. Take care of your own affairs as well as you can. For our part we cannot be with you; for we are busy about other affairs: farewell."—Ed.

tion to maintain the ancient system with inflexible rigour. We are at a loss to discover a single concession in favour of the claims of conscience, proceeding from an authority which catholics are bound to respect. The renunciation of the rights of the pope to interfere in temporal matters, and the inviolable obligation of oaths taken to heretics, will be considered perhaps by some, as important concessions; but they are far from settling the question. What security have we, that the persecuting maxims of popery are revoked, or that the consciences of its adherents are not still instructed in the indispensable duty of demanding the interference of the magistrate in the suppression and punishment of heresy?

The fundamental principle of the catholic system is, the supposed infallibility of the church of Rome. Until this point is determined, it is to little purpose to engage in particular controversies, or attempt to expose the erroneousness of her doctrines, or the idolatry of her worship. These are merely a superstructure erected without foundation.

As it is the design of the following pages to furnish a popular antidote to the seductions of her priests and advocates, it becomes indispensably necessary to examine the pleas by which her pretension to infallibility is attempted to be supported. This is the more requisite because there is reason to fear that multitudes of protestants are, in a great measure, ignorant of the *true grounds* of popery; and that, while they strongly reprobate, in detail, its errors and absurdities, having little or no acquaintance with the principle which forms the keystone of the whole system, they are easily liable to be baffled and confounded, when they encounter a subtle disputant. It will be in vain for you to urge, in debating with a catholic, the absurdity of transubstantiation, or the idolatry of the mass. You begin the controversy at the wrong end; and though you accumulate ever so large a pile of invincible argument, or scriptural proof, you make no progress. He will [seldom, if ever,] descend to meet you on that ground; he professes to prostrate both his reason and his faith before the majesty of the

church. In the mysteries of faith the dictates of reason are fallacious, the interpretation of the Scriptures is precarious and uncertain, and no basis of a divine and supernatural faith can be laid, but in submission to an authorized infallible guide,—which guide is the Roman Catholic Church! You will be reminded of the innumerable sects and schisms, convulsions and disorders, which have sprung from the exercise of a pretended free inquiry; whence he will infer the necessity of some visible standard of appeal, some acknowledged infallible judge: and the promise of the Spirit to the apostles to lead them into all truth, together with the preeminence of Peter above his colleagues; to whom, as an immovable rock and foundation of the church, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" were exclusively assigned,—will be triumphantly urged to support the claims of the bishop of Rome, his legitimate representative and successor. Thus, by a mixture of specious probabilities, with the assumption of innumerable facts, a web of sophistry will be weaved, sufficient, often, to entangle the "unlearned and unstable." That it is nothing more, however, than unfounded and presumptuous sophistry, a little attention will enable us to perceive.

That a church is infallible is not a self-evident proposition; it is not one of those truths which are acknowledged the moment they are announced, like the assertion that two and two are four. It must therefore be *proved*: nor can it be proved by her own assertion; because it is just as easy for any other community to declare itself infallible as for the church of Rome. To allow her a prerogative so extraordinary, merely because she claims it, would legitimate the boldest imposture. As little can it be proved by any appeal to the principles of reason: the possession of infallibility by an individual, or by a number of individuals, is a matter of fact, whose truth must be evinced in the same manner as other facts. Hence it necessarily follows, that the pretensions to infallibility, assumed by the catholic church, must solely rest on the testimony of scripture. For this purpose it is alleged, that St. Peter was constituted the prince

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of the apostles, the foundation on which the church was to be built; that to him were primarily and chiefly given the keys of the kingdom of heaven; that as Jesus Christ prayed for him that his faith should not fail, he possessed a guarantee for the truth of his doctrines, and the infallibility of his decisions; and that, having established his episcopal throne at Rome, he transmitted his immunities and prerogatives unimpaired to his successors in that see.

Such, for substance, is the argument deduced from scripture in support of this extraordinary pretension. To this are added other considerations of the nature of probabilities, in favour of this assumed infallibility: such as the pretended necessity of some living standard of appeal, some visible judge of controversies, together with the error, confusion, and uncertainty, to which it is asserted the church must be for ever abandoned, in the absence of some such living oracle. If christians are left to interpret the Scriptures for themselves, without an infallible guidance, their interpretations will necessarily vary in proportion to the different degrees of their capacity or attention. Their interpretation can, at best, be but probable; and a probable conclusion can never be admitted as the ground of a divine faith. It will not be at all necessary to discuss accurately, at large, the arguments founded on the passages of scripture before adduced. Suffice it to observe, that the links which compose the chain of the argument are numerous, and that it would not be easy to prove any one of them to the satisfaction of an unprejudiced inquirer. In that argument it is assumed for granted, that St. Peter was invested with a supremacy over the rest of the apostles; that the keys were *exclusively* given to him; that his faith was more indefectible than that of his brethren; that he exercised the episcopal office at Rome; and that he devolved his peculiar power and prerogatives on his successors in that sacred office. Every one of these arbitrary assumptions is destitute of a shadow of truth, either from scripture or antiquity. That Peter was *ever* at Rome, we have no evidence but vague and uncertain

tradition; that he exercised the episcopal functions there, is still more uncertain, or rather extremely improbable, as it is neither insinuated in scripture, nor very consistent with his higher character and functions. But, supposing both these points were conceded, what evidence have we of that devolution of his power and prerogatives on his successors, on which the authority assumed by the bishop of Rome entirely rests? From the language of scripture and the [testimony] of antiquity, there is much more reason for affirming that James the Less was bishop of the church of Jerusalem, than that Peter sustained that office at Rome; and, by a parity of reason, his successors must be supposed to have inherited his powers and his infallibility; and the rather, since the church at Jerusalem was the mother of all other churches, planted, not by one, but by all the apostles, often dignified, by their united presence,---a church on which the redundance of spiritual gifts was first poured and consecrated by the blood of the first martyr. If, in opposition to this, we are reminded that the succeeding bishops of Jerusalem derived from St. James the rights attached to the episcopal function, but not his personal prerogatives and immunities as an apostle,—this very distinction applies precisely to the successors of St. Peter.

This may suffice to show the extreme frivolity and levity of the proofs adduced from scripture, in support of the claim of papal or catholic infallibility. But, admitting the arguments derived from this quarter were much more cogent than they are, it is evident that they are entirely deduced from the interpretation of certain passages of scripture, and consequently depend on the correctness of that interpretation. Is this interpretation, I would ask, to be taken for granted, or is it to be proved and sustained by the principles of sound criticism? Are we to take the mere affirmation of the church of Rome on this subject, and at once admit that the inference she deduces from these passages is just because she asserts it to be so? This is impossible, because this would [be to] acknowledge her infallibility, which is the very point to be proved. We are inquiring after the *proofs* of her

infallibility: she refers us for satisfaction to the passages of scripture before adduced. Her supposed infallibility can afford no sort of security for her correct interpretation of these passages, because her object in urging these passages is to prove her infallibility. To say that she has put a right construction on these texts because she is infallible, and at the same time attempt to prove her infallibility by that construction, would be an insult to common sense. Her right to be acknowledged as the infallible guide and director of our faith, must either be blindly submitted to without proof or inquiry, or it must be left to be determined by the private judgement of every individual; and, if the votaries of the church of Rome are not willing to confess they admit the validity of her claims, without any reasons whatever, they must have exercised the right of free inquiry as well as protestants, not indeed in respect to particular controversies, but in relation to this great controversy,—What is the standard of truth, and who is the judge of controversy? The church of Rome boldly affirms, that if individuals are left to judge for themselves, such is the obscurity of scripture, that no certainty could be obtained, no conclusion deduced, in which the conscience may safely rest. Yet, with egregious inconsistency, she refers us to that very scripture in proof of the justice of her claims. Here, I would ask, can we without an infallible guide attain the real meaning of the texts which she quotes in her favour? If not, it is impossible for them to prove her infallibility. If we can, then it follows that there are some parts of scripture whose meaning may be certainly ascertained without her infallible guidance. And what, then, becomes of her complaint of the hopeless obscurity of scripture, which is affirmed to render her aid so indispensable? And what must we think of her outcries against the supposed arrogance of pretending to the exercise of free inquiry, and of judging of the Scriptures for ourselves, when, without such an exercise and such a power of judging, it is found impossible to obtain the least proof or presumption of her boasted infallibility?

Some parts of scripture, then, the church of Rome herself must allow, are capable of being understood without her aid. Those declarations of scripture on which she rests her claim to implicit submission and obedience, she *must* allow to be sufficiently plain and intelligible, to bind the conscience of every member of her community, who is prepared to assign a reason for his being a catholic: and as an entire agreement with the dogmas of the church is all the faith which she requires in order to the salvation of her members, she must acknowledge, as well as ourselves, that the Scriptures contain a rule of faith sufficient for the purpose of salvation; the only difference is, that in our opinion the scripture clearly unfolds a system of saving truth, while in [that of the Roman Catholics] they are obscure in every point, except in the few passages which direct us to the church, the only authentic and immediate source of saving knowledge.

We ascribe some efficacy to the word of God itself; while they contend that the principal or only benefit it affords consists in conducting us to the church. The Scriptures themselves, indeed, affirm, that they are "able to make us wise unto salvation," and by them "we must be judged at the last day." The church asserts on the contrary, that they are covered with an impenetrable obscurity [not to be removed] without her interference, and that we shall be judged at the last day, not by our submission *to the Scriptures*, but our obedience *to her*. In her system the principal use of the Scriptures was to give birth to the church, whose place she now occupies, whose prerogatives she assumes as the sole directory of conscience, and the living oracle of God. Her treatment of the scripture almost reminds us of the fabulous history of Jupiter, who ascended to supreme [power] by the mutilation and banishment of his father.

The portentous doctrine of infallibility, as it is employed in the catholic church, stamps an entirely new character on the christian religion, substitutes a new object of faith and dependence, deifies what is human,

hides and cancels what is divine, and transfers our allegiance from God to mortals.

But to return to the argument.—On all systems, the preference of one religion to another must either be founded on capriee, custom, or some other principle equally unworthy of determining the choice of a reasonable being, or upon examination. If the catholics wish to convert us to their persuasion, they must assign their reasons for affirming that there is in existence an infallible community, styling itself the church; that that community is their church, in preference to the Greek church, the Armenian, or the Nestorian. Here they must admit the exercise of private judgement in examining these reasons, unless they have the effrontery to assert that their bare affirmation supersedes the necessity of any further proof: and, admitting the Scriptures to be the word of God, which is the easiest task for ordinary christians—to learn from them what is necessary to salvation, or to judge of the claims of the church to supremacy and infallibility? For the former, if you believe the Scriptures themselves, nothing more is requisite than a candid and honest mind; for the latter a deep acquaintance with history and antiquity, and, particularly, a clear comprehension of the meaning of a portion of scripture, by no means the most plain and perspicuous. Involved as those passages are which are urged from the New Testament in support of the papal claims, in language highly figurative and metaphorical, is it easier for a plain unlettered christian to judge of the precise meaning of the term "keys," and "the kingdom of heaven opening and shutting," than to learn the import of that declaration, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" There is so much room for variation in the interpretation of the passages [on which the papists lay such great stress,] that it would not be easy to find two commentators, in any community, whose expositions perfectly coincide; with respect to the latter, he that runs may read. St. John distinctly informs us with what purpose he wrote his

gospel, in the following words: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Is there sufficient evidence in what St. John wrote, to convince us that Jesus is the Christ; and is it within the power of ordinary men to judge of this evidence? If this question be answered in the affirmative, then what occasion is there for the interposition of an infallible interpreter, since he who is convinced by this record that Jesus is the Christ, is already in a state of salvation? If it be replied in the negative, that the writing of St. John is not sufficient to prove to an impartial reader that Jesus is the Christ, it must be confessed, however reluctantly, that the beloved apostle was a most impertinent and fallacious writer, in representing his performance as a fit instrument for the accomplishment of an object to which it is not adequate.

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THE CHARACTER OF THE REV. R. HALL,

OF ARNSBY.

[WRITTEN IN 1791.*]

THE distinguished talents of our deceased friend will long live in the remembrance of all who knew him. His advantages of education were extremely small; but possessing from his infancy a contemplative cast of mind, and a habit of patient thinking, he laid in a large stock of useful knowledge. In the character of a minister of the gospel, there have been but few more generally esteemed. Attentive only to the improvement of his hearers, he forgot himself, and appeared entirely absorbed in his subject. Though he was unacquainted with the graces of oratory, and the embellishments of language, scarcely any man spoke with a more striking and visible effect. From nature he derived a large share of sensibility; and, as he excelled at the same time in taking a profound and comprehensive view of a subject, the understandings and affections of his hearers were equally interested in his discourses, which generally flowed in a stream of argument and pathos. From a natural diffidence of temper, heightened by a consciousness of his want of education, he often ascended the pulpit with tremour; but, as soon as this subsided, he generally led his hearers, step by step, into a large field of serious and manly thinking, kindled as he advanced

* This sketch was published anonymously, at the end of Dr. Ryland's funeral sermon for Mr. Hall, of Arnsby.—ED.

and expatiated with increasing energy and conviction till the subject was exhausted. His eminent piety lent a peculiar unction to the sentiments he delivered, led him to seize the most interesting views of every subject, and turned topics, which in the hands of others would have furnished barren speculation only, into materials for devotion and prayer. He appeared to the greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind was greatness. At times he seemed to labour with conceptions too big for his utterance; and, if an obscurity ever pervaded his discourses, it must be traced to this source, the disproportion of his language to the vastness of his conceptions. He had great force without ornament, and grandeur without correctness. His ministry, in the hands of God, was effectual to the conversion of great numbers; and in this particular he was distinguished in a manner not very common; for the last years of his life were the most successful. But it was not only in the pulpit that he shone; in his private sphere of action, as a christian, his virtues were not less distinguished than his talents as a minister. Deep devotion and unaffected humility entered far into this part of his character. Few men have passed through greater vicissitudes of life than the deceased, and perhaps, in each of them, no man preserved with a more inviolable consistency the character of a christian. He was very early introduced into the school of affliction, and the greater part of his subsequent life was distinguished by an uncommon succession of trials and distresses. On his first entrance into the ministry his fortitude was exercised in a scene of persecution and reproaches, which lasted for many years. His worldly prospects, at the same time, were gloomy and precarious in a high degree: he had a very numerous family, and an income extremely limited. He united great susceptibility of heart with firmness of mind; and, endowed with these dispositions, he met reproaches with gentleness, sustained adversity with fortitude, and pains and sorrows of various kinds with exemplary patience. In the habitual frame of his spirit

he "walked with God." The consolations that supported him through life awaited him at death; for so tranquil were his last moments, so completely was he reconciled to the prospect of both worlds, that he declared, a little time before he expired, he *would not give a straw either to live or die.* From his first acquaintance with religion, to the close of his life, he was never known to express the least hesitation respecting his state, but enjoyed an uninterrupted assurance of a happy immortality. His conversation breathed so much of heaven, was so tinctured with the very spirit of religion, that none could enjoy it without an opportunity of being made better. It was evident to all who knew him, that his religion was not a transient impression, but a permanent principle; that it blended itself with all his feelings and his actions; and that it raised his thoughts, his views, and his passions towards heaven.

In the first years of his ministry, he encountered, as has been already remarked, much persecution and reproach; but, at length, his exemplary conduct dissipated these prejudices, and gained him so completely the esteem of all classes of mankind, that it may be doubted whether he had an enemy in the world: certainly he had none but those whom his piety made such. He was distinguished as a lover of peace, and was as anxious to heal breaches as he was cautious to avoid them. With some, his extreme solicitude for the propagation of evangelical sentiments might seem like bigotry: but those who knew him best were well convinced that this was no part of his character, and that he regarded sentiments in no other light, nor cherished them in any higher degree, than as he conceived them favourable to the interests of holiness and virtue.

His brethren in the ministry will long and deeply lament him; for to them his talents and dispositions peculiarly endeared him. How many private circles hath he cheered and enlightened by his presence! In how many public solemnities hath he lifted up an ensign to the people, invited them to the standard of the cross, and warmed and exalted their affections, whilst "his doctrine dropped as rain, and his speech distilled as the dew!" Great abilities are often allied to pride; but the character of the deceased was an illustrious exception to this rule. His talents and virtues were in some measure concealed from the world, and almost entirely from himself, by a veil of the most unaffected modesty. He was never so happy as when he was permitted to sit in the shade, though the high opinion entertained of his abilities seldom allowed him that indulgence. It would be difficult to conceive a human mind more completely purged from the leaven of pride or of envy than was that of our deceased friend. In this particular his magnanimity was so great, that he seemed on all occasions desirous of sinking the recollection of himself in the reputation and applause of his contemporaries. To cultivate the seeds of reflection and improvement in the minds of his inferiors,—to behold the growing talents and virtues of his brethren,—to draw merit from its obscurity, and give confidence to timid worth,—formed some of the highest satisfactions of his life.

His temper was grave and contemplative, yet few men took greater delight in christian society; and on these occasions he seldom failed to mix with serious converse a vein of pleasantry and humour, in which he greatly excelled. From his integrity and knowledge, it may be inferred he was eminently skilled for imparting advice; yet so carefully did he shun every inclination to dictate, that he scarcely ever gave it unsolicited. His sentiments, when required, he imparted with tenderness and freedom; but he never made advice a disguise for arrogance, or an engine of rule, nor ever presumed to think himself affronted if his counsels were not followed. In his whole deportment, prudence and humility were conspicuous; a prudence, however, that was candid and manly, as far removed from *art* as his humility was from meanness. He had failings, no doubt, (for who is free?) but they were scarcely ever suffered to influence his conduct, or to throw even a transient shade over the splendour of his character. Upon the whole, if a strong and penetrating genius, simplicity of manners, integrity

of heart, fidelity in friendship,—and all these virtues consecrated by piety the most ardent and sincere on the high altar of devotion,—have any claim to respect, the memory of the deceased will long be cherished with tears of admiration and sorrow by those who knew him.

FUNERAL ORATION,

DELIVERED AT THE INTERMENT OF THE REV. HABAKKUK CRABB, OF ROYSTON, IN HERTFORDSHIRE, ON THE FIRST OF JAN. 1795.*

Among the many appearances which man presents to the view of a contemplative mind, death is one of the most extraordinary. Whatever be the station he has filled, and however he has conducted himself in it,—whether he has adorned it by virtue, or degraded it by vice,—whether he has passed obscurely through the world, or filled it with the fame of his actions,—he soon disappears, and the "place which once knew him, knows him no more." Over all the sons of Adam death hath reigned. The worthy and beneficent are embalmed by the tears of tender but transient regret. The chasm their departure has occasioned in society is filled up by their successors, who tread the same circle of life and death, and thus perpetuate the established order of the universe.

But though the grave terminates the business of life, it does not terminate the inquiries of the living. Whether the whole of existence is comprised within the present life, or whether it be merely a passage into an unseen state, is a question which has engaged the attention of men in every age; nor would it be possible (were it ever so proper) to detail, within the limits of this address, the various reasonings and conjectures to which it

* This first appeared in the introduction to a volume of Mr. Crabb's posthumous Sermons, published in 1795.—Ed.

has given occasion. When we contemplate death under its sensible appearances,—the destruction of the external organs, and the corruption of the whole mass,—we are tempted to regard it as the extinction of being, and to suppose its effects upon the human race are the same as upon the inferior orders of creatures. Whatever has been the object of the senses, in both, is reduced to putrefaction and dust. But when, again, we recollect, in how many important respects we are distinguished above the brutes, we cannot help indulging higher expectations, and looking for a nobler destiny. Our superior comprehension of mind qualifies us for a longer duration of being. While the brute is capable of enjoying little more than the present moment, the remembrance of what is past, and the anticipation of what is to come, enable us to multiply our resources, and to diffuse our existence, if I may so speak, over a larger surface. To compare one state of being with another, to learn wisdom from experience, and to regulate our future expectations by what has already occurred, are employments congenial with the human mind. But it is evident that a creature, possessed of such faculties, will be capable of continually making new acquisitions of knowledge, and of advancing nearer and nearer to perfection.

Among all the tribes of creatures with which we are acquainted, man is the only one that appears to have any dread of annihilation, or the remotest conception of another state. How shall we account for the universal prevalence of these sentiments, in spite of all the sensible appearances of death, unless they are either the vestige of some early revelation, or the incorrupted dictate of nature? How is it that we are the only beings that extend their anxieties beyond the grave; that we are so reluctant to quit the present scene; and that, when we are at length compelled to depart, we grasp at the very shadow of immortality, and console ourselves with the hope of surviving in the regrets of our friends, and the reputation of our actions?

Though there seems to be much plausibility in these

topics, it must be confessed, the best arguments for a future state are derived from the moral part of our nature; or, in other words, from our capability of good and ill desert. For, since it is plain that God has made us moral agents, and placed us under a law, we may be assured he has not made us so in vain, but that he will call us to an account for our actions; and, as there is no exact distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, we are entitled to expect another, suited to the respective characters of men, and the moral attributes of the Deity. If, after all, we consider actual opinions on this head, we shall find the wisest among the heathen were far from attaining any certainty. When they gave scope to their feelings and their hopes, they sometimes painted the elysian abodes of the virtuous in the warmest colouring of eloquence; in their cooler moments they subsided into scepticism; so that, on the whole, the idea of a future state seems to have operated not so much as a fixed principle, as a vague presentiment.

Revelation can alone boast of having "brought life and immortality to light." The religion of Jesus Christ places the reality of a future state at the foundation of its truths. It is there so constantly reverted to, so often repeated, and so solemnly enforced, that it has never been by any class of christians disputed or denied. Nor is the reality only of a future state revealed in christianity: as far as is consistent with the present limitation of our faculties, it affords us the justest views of its nature; which it makes to consist not in sensual gratifications, or festive bowers—the visions of a Mahometan Paradise—but in enjoyments the most suited to the rational and immortal mind; a union with God, the knowledge of his perfections, and the eternal fruition of his love. The information which christianity imparts on these subjects is not conveyed in dark and symbolical expressions, or in a chain of philosophical reasoning; but in a manner the most perspicuous and popular. With what majestic simplicity does our Lord assure us of the resurrection of the just!—"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead,

yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." When many of the disciples of our Lord went back, and walked no more with him, being offended with the sublime mysteries of his doctrine, he took occasion to ask his twelve apostles—"Will ye also go away?" To which Peter, in the name of them all, made this reply—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." In this short answer we behold the distinguished lustre of christianity. It explains at once the ground of a rational attachment to it, and will be sufficient to justify its profession from the reproach of folly, however mysterious its doctrines, however arduous its duties, and however painful or costly its sacrifices.

There are two purposes connected with the present solemnity to which the doctrine of immortality ought to be applied. The first regards the regulation of life; the second, the inspiring us with fortitude in the contemplation of our own deaths, and those of our relatives and friends. If we consider ourselves as candidates for an eternal state of happiness, it becomes us to regard life, with all its vicissitudes, as a probationary state, and to look upon every thing, that is not directly or indirectly conducive to our eternal welfare, as foreign to our purpose, and undeserving our pursuit. Heavenly-mindedness is, in this view, as much the dictate of reason as of scripture. It is nothing more than the placing our affections where we expect our felicity; the wisdom of preferring the end to the means,—that which is permanent to that which is transitory. Let the men of the world, who disbelieve the declarations of the gospel respecting eternal realities, lead a life, if they please, of dissipation and vice: but for a professor of religion to confine his affections to the earth is equally impious and absurd. Distracted betwixt his inordinate attachment to the present, and his apprehension of a future world, his religion, if it will bear that name, must be a constant source of disquietude. He has neither the calmness of

insensibility, nor the triumph of faith. His prevailing regard to the interests of the present life renders it impossible for him to set his affections on a better state; while the carnal and reluctant glances he is compelled to take of that state are sufficient to imbitter his enjoyments and disturb his repose.

The misery which persons of this description suffer from an inward conflict, between principle and practice, is the chief reason that has induced superficial observers to represent christianity as a gloomy, melancholy system. There is no other foundation for this charge, than that its claims are grand and extensive; that it disdains a compromise with the corrupt attachments of the heart; and that they who will not allow it the dominion of their affections will find it the troubler of their thoughts.

Whoever lives under the habitual influence of those tempers which qualify us for heaven, derives from his view of the eternal world the purest serenity and delight. In the midst of the severest disappointments of human life, secret consolations spring up in his mind, which sometimes swell into rapture, disarm the world of its terrors, and afford him a foretaste of unutterable bliss. In vain will ye look elsewhere for true magnanimity and moral grandeur. It is religion alone which both animates and softens the heart, cherishes sensibility, instils fortitude, and enables us to triumph without extravagance, and to suffer without dejection.

If the scripture doctrine of immortality is entitled to so much weight in the regulation of LIFE, its influence is not less sovereign in dispelling the terrors of DEATH, and consoling us under the loss of our dearest friends and relatives. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope; for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up to-

gether with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." And who can fail being penetrated with the divine consolation they afford? If ever christianity appears in its power it is when it erects its trophies on the TOMB; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.

Nor are the words I have quoted adapted to support the mind of a christian in the view of his *own* dissolution only; they administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow, on such occasions, nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, "Jesus wept." But the sorrow which a christian feels in such situations is mingled with hope. By the light of faith, he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them still under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is for ever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head; and when he "who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory." The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, outlive the habitable globe, and form in all probability, a principal part of the happiness of the blessed.

It is not unusual, I am aware, on occasions like these, to pass high encomiums on the character of the deceased; a mode of proceeding the less requisite, in the present instance, as the character of Mr. Crabb was too well established, and held in too high esteem, to have any thing to hope from praise, or to fear from censure. His mild and gentle spirit rendered it nearly impossible for him to have any enemies. The innocence and sanctity of his behaviour, the sensibility of his heart, the fidelity with which he discharged the duties of life, and the equanimity with which he bore its rebukes and sufferings, will leave a lasting impression on the minds of all his friends and acquaintance. You of this church and congregation have lost a friend, an instructor, a pastor; one who was anxious, on every occasion, to promote your spiritual and eternal welfare; who knew how to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." You, my friends, will long remember, I trust, the affectionate exhortations he addressed to you, and make it appear, on the day of solemn account, that he "has not laboured in vain, nor spent his strength for nought." His relation to you, as your pastor, has ceased; but its effects and consequences will never cease; they will reach into eternity, and "become the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." If the duties of the ministerial character appeared so weighty in the eyes of an apostle that he was ready to sink under it, and exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" you will recollect it was its connexion with the eternal interests of his hearers which rendered his situation so arduous, and his responsibility so awful.

You have now before you one more example of the uncertainty of life. Your deceased friend and pastor, was cut off in the midst of his days. His sun instead of performing the usual circuit, set in its meridian. He, no doubt, often endeavoured, during his continuance among you, to convince you of the vanity of the world, and the insufficiency of all its enjoyments to render you happy; but Providence determined he should do more; that he should instruct you from the tomb, on these topics, and bring them home to your senses.

Another year is passed away, and you have entered upon a new portion of time.* The division of time into distinct periods, besides its utility in business and in science, is favourable to moral reflection. On the entrance upon a new year, a contemplative mind will be

* This Oration was delivered on New Year's Day.

naturally employed in estimating its acquisitions, comparing its improvements, retracing past occurrences, and revolving future prospects. The giddy and thoughtless feel their attention for a moment fixed, and suspecting all is not right, form some indistinct resolution of repentance and amendment, which they are determined to execute as soon as some present scheme shall be finished, some prevailing passion gratified, or some expected change in their situation shall take place. The present moment seems always attended with insuperable difficulties; but they still flatter themselves with the hope of some more auspicious period, when their minds will be disengaged, their passions composed, and religion assert its power. Thus, year rolls on after year, the self-delusion is repeated, and, while they are planning new schemes of life, they sink into the grave.

If a hardened contempt of religion has slain its thousands, a feeble and irresolute spirit has slain its ten thousands. Are there none in this assembly, who it is to be feared, are convinced of the importance of religion, and are yet unwilling to pay an immediate attention to it, flattering themselves they shall have ample opportunities of satisfying all its demands?

Vain, presumptuous man! hast thou penetrated the councils of the Almighty, or been permitted to read thy destiny, that, whilst thou beholdest the ravages of death all around thee,—the multitudes which fall at thy right hand and at thy left, the young and the old, the feeble and the strong, hurried into eternity,—thou shouldst suppose thyself alone firm and immovable amidst this flux and succession of being! Wouldst thou wish to surmount the fear of death? Acquaint thyself with him who is the resurrection and the life; with that Saviour, who is its author, its revealer, and its pattern. "Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him." Attend to his instructions, and yield yourself up to his guidance. You will then be able to converse familiarly with death. You will feel no terror in the prospect of future judgement, but will wait for its approach, and be able to stand before the Son of God at

his coming. "Finally, let us who are of the light and of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." Instead of murmuring at such afflictive dispensations as separate us from those we esteem and love, let us employ them as inducements to set our affections on a better world, where we shall shortly join them; remembering, that whatever ties of affection are broken by death, are taken from the enjoyments of time to enrich the prospect of eternity.

SKETCH

OF THE

CHARACTER OF MRS. M. CARRYER.

[WRITTEN IN 1812.]

IT is not my intention to attempt a laboured eulogium on our departed sister, but justice compels me briefly to notice some of the distinguishing traits of her character. I regret that, partly owing to the natural reserve of the deceased, and partly owing to my own unsocial humour, my acquaintance with her was so limited. I knew enough of her, however, to convince me that she was a person of no ordinary worth; and, from the testimony of all who were favoured with her intimacy, I am fully persuaded her piety was of the most solid kind, not evaporating in talk, nor obtruding itself in an ostentatious profession, but operating in a constant and exemplary discharge of every private and social duty. She was a pattern of diligence, as well in her attention to domestic engagements, as in the constancy with which she applied herself to the means of grace, in the closet and in the sanctuary. As a wife, a mother, and a member of a christian church, her behaviour was such, that it is impossible to say which character she adorned most. Averse from every kind of display, her religion was of a retired nature; "planted by the rivers of water," and fed by a secret spring, "its leaf never withered, and it brought forth its fruit in its season." Her faith was such as purified the heart, and manifested itself in a

series of wise and holy actions. Her hope was an "anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil." In the former part of her experience, she was sometimes considerably agitated by doubts and fears; but, during the progress of the malady which terminated her dissolution, her painful apprehensions gradually subsided, and, although she sowed in tears, she reaped in joy. Her dying testimony to the excellence of religion, and to the power and grace of the Redeemer, was most affecting; and will, it is humbly hoped, leave a lasting impression on survivors. She often expressed her gratitude to Providence for directing her choice to a companion in life, from whose example, and from whose prayers, she derived important assistance in her walk with God; so that the change of situation, which to many females becomes a temptation and a snare, became to her a great means of spiritual improvement. The virtues which adorn a single state, she exhibited, not only unimpaired, but with increasing lustre, in her conjugal capacity. The essential benefit she derived from her obedience to the scriptural injunction to "marry in the Lord," conveys an impressive admonition to the youth of both sexes. Let such as attach any importance to the cultivation of piety, and whose first solicitude it is to be prepared for eternity, avoid taking to their bosoms a domestic enemy, with whom it will be requisite to live in a state either of perpetual counteraction, or of sinful compliance; and from whom, without the interposition of divine grace, they must anticipate an eternal separation. Our dear departed sister made a wise choice, and determined to select, as a companion for life, one with whom she could indulge a confident hope of sharing a blessed eternity.

Her rapid advancement in every christian grace was manifest to every one except to herself: for she often expressed the deep sense she entertained of her manifest imperfections, while others beheld nothing in her but what was "pure, lovely, and of good report." As she was clothed with humility, so she was eminently sober-minded, at the utmost distance from indulging in the

levities, follies, and vain competitions of the age. She was chaste, a keeper at home, a lover of her husband, a lover of her children, and one who guided her house with discretion. Kindness to the indigent entered deeply into her character; she delighted "to do good to all men, especially to such as are of the household of faith." She was perfectly superior to the vanity of dress; her attire was suited to her station, neither mean nor splendid ·but such as became a woman professing godliness. Her conviction of the nothingness of the world was profound, and she longed, would her modesty have permitted, to admonish her young friends from her dying bed, to be on their guard against its fascinations and its snares. To her relations she often exclaimed, almost with her dying breath, "The world! the world!" intending to warn them of what she conceived to form their chief danger.

On the whole, among the numerous losses which this church has recently sustained, I know of none more entitled to lasting lamentation than the present; nor has there been a member removed, during the period of my ministry, whose life has been more exemplary, or whose memory will be more precious.

THE CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS ROBINSON,

VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, LEICESTER.

As exhibited in a Speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society, April 1813.

It is with a melancholy satisfaction I rise to express my entire approbation of the sentiments contained in the resolution just read.

It would, in my opinion, have been unnatural to usher our annual report into the world, without noticing that solemn and affecting dispensation which has deprived this society, this town, and this county, of its principal ornament. We are weakened this day by the falling of a pious and a great man in Israel. In the formation of this society our incomparable friend had a principal share; and through every stage he gave it an unremitted attention, and watched over its interests with a parental solicitude. The idea of instituting an auxiliary society in Leicester was no sooner suggested to him, than it engaged his most cordial good wishes: he lent to its support the vigour of his masculine understanding, the energies of his capacious heart; and to him beyond any other individual, it is indebted for the patronage and the maturity it has attained. He was, indeed, the father of this institution.—But of what institution formed for the promotion of the temporal and spiritual welfare of man-

kind in this place was he not the father? We can look nowhere, throughout this large and populous town, without perceiving the vestiges of his unwearied solicitude for the advancement of the happiness of his fellow-creatures. He has inscribed his history in the numerous charitable and religious foundations which owe their existence or their prosperity to his influence. Our jails, our hospitals, our schools, our churches, are replete with monuments of his worth, and with the effects of his energetic benevolence.

It is recorded of the great Hannibal, that, when an infant, his father conducted him to an altar, and made him vow eternal hostility to the Roman republic. Our venerable friend, when he first entered Leicester, appears, with an ardour not less intense, to have devoted himself to its interests. From the moment he entered the place, he appears to have relinquished all selfish pursuits, all idea of private gratification, and to have formed that system of conduct from which he never departed, which had the most immediate tendency to meliorate the state of its inhabitants. He became altogether a public character: he meditated, he wrote, he preached, he breathed, only for the public. Rarely, if ever, was there a mind more perfectly purified from every tincture of selfishness or vanity. He made the most extensive sacrifices of his time and of his repose, with a spontaneity and alacrity which implied an almost total oblivion of his existence as an individual. Endowed with a capacity for high attainments in science, and distinguished at the university by the honours assigned to superior merit, he generously declined the pursuit of literary eminence for the sole purpose of doing good. It is but few who are capable of adequately appreciating the magnitude of such a sacrifice. Dr. Paley was, certainly, one of those few: and I had it from the lips of our venerable friend, that, in addicting himself to the duties of a parish priest, he had, in the opinion of that great man, chosen the better part; a choice which it is evident Heaven singularly sanctioned and approved. In fixing his system of life, he

had unquestionably a view to a future account, and formed his determination on the assured persuasion of his appearing before the judgement-seat of Christ, where the salvation of one soul will cause a more glorious distinction than the greatest literary attainments; where all greatness of a merely intellectual nature will disappear, and nothing endure the scrutiny but active and disinterested virtue.

In the mean time, how narrow the bounds of his influence, how confined the ascendency of his character, had he been only the solitary student, instead of being the zealous and exemplary pastor, and the active citizen! On the former supposition, he had inscribed his memorial in books; on the present, he inscribed it on hearts; and instead of his being an object of the admiration of the few, he was the man of the people.

In separate parts of his character, it were not impossible to find some who equalled, and others who excelled him; but in that rare combination of qualities which fitted him for such extensive usefulness, he stands unrivalled. As a pastor and public instructor, it may be possible to meet with some who have attained the same eminence; as a public man, he may have been equalled; but where shall we look in modern times for such an example of the union of the highest endowments as a pastor, and preacher, with the qualifications adapted to the functions of civil life? It is this rare union which appears to me to give the character of our venerable friend its decided preeminence. It is not necessary to recall to your recollection the talents of Mr. Robinson as a public instructor; you have most, if not all of you, witnessed his pulpit exertions, on that spot where he was accustomed to retain a listening throng hanging upon his lips, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed, by his manly, and unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him, without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him; or without being struck with the perspicuity of his statements, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David, which, struck by his powerful hands,

sent forth more than mortal sounds, and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid coruscations of Cicero.

The hearers of Mr. Robinson were too much occupied by the subjects he presented to their attention to waste a thought on the speaker; this occupied a second place in the order of their reflections: but when it did occur, it assumed the character, not of superficial admiration, but of profound attachment. Their feelings towards him were not those of persons gratified, but benefited; and they listened to his instructions not as a source of amusement, but as a spring of living water. There never was a settled pastor, probably, who had formed a juster conception of the true end of preaching, who pursued it more steadily, or attained it to a greater extent. He preached immortal truth with a most extraordinary simplicity, perspicuity, and energy, in a style adapted to all capacities, equally removed from vulgarity and from affected refinement: and the tribute paid to his exertions consisted not in loud applauses: it was of a higher order; it consisted of penitential sighs, holy resolutions, of a determination of the whole soul for God, and such impressions on the spirits of men as will form the line of separation betwixt the happy and the miserable to all eternity.

In a word, by "the manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" and the success which followed was such as might be expected from such efforts. Through the protracted period of his labours, many thousands who have finished their course with joy, derived from his ministry, there is reason to believe, the principle of a new life.

His residence in Leicester forms an epoch in the religious history of this county. From that time must be dated, and to his agency under Providence must be ascribed, a decided improvement in the moral and religious state of this town and its vicinity; an increase of religious light; together with the general diffusion of a

taste and relish for the pure word of God. It is only once in an age that an individual is permitted to confer such benefits on the place of his residence, as this ancient and respectable borough derived from the labours of Mr. Robinson; and the change which Baxter accomplished at Kidderminster, *he* effected at Leicester. It was the boast of Augustus, that he found the city of Rome composed of brick, and left it marble. Mr. Robinson might say, without arrogance, that he had been the instrument of effecting a far more beneficial and momentous change. He came to this place while it was sunk in vice and irreligion; he left it eminently distinguished by sobriety of manners and the practice of warm, serious, and enlightened piety. He added not aqueducts and palaces, nor did he increase the splendour of its public edifices; but he embellished it with undecaying ornaments; he renovated the minds of the people, and turned a large portion of them "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." He embellished it with living stones, and replenished it with numerous temples of the Holy Ghost. He extended its intercourse with heaven, and prepared a numerous class of its inhabitants for the enjoyment of celestial bliss. Of the number of those who will devoutly acknowledge him as their spiritual father at the day of final audit, that day only can determine. Nor was his usefulness confined to the permanent inhabitants of this place; it was extended to the asylum of the sick, and to the cell of the criminal: the former found in him a physician to the soul, and returned to their homes not only with recruited health, but with renovated minds; and the latter were, in many instances, by penitence, and prayer, prepared for their awful destiny. Of him it may be said, to an extent seldom equalled by a mere mortal, "He went about doing good." "When the eye saw him, it gave witness of him; when the ear heard him, it blessed him; for he helped the poor and the fatherless, and delivered them that were ready to perish." In addition to his numerous avocations, he undertook the weekly instruction of an excellent and extensive school, which was formed

in his own parish, under his auspices, to which he imparted the elements of religious knowledge with a tenderness and assiduity which will never be forgotten.

There was scarcely a charitable institution set on foot, or a scheme of benevolence devised, of which he did not form the principal spring. He was truly the centre about which every thing of public utility revolved; while his wisdom guided, his spirit animated, and his character impressed itself on all useful undertakings.

Though he came to this place a stranger, without any of the means of acquiring adventitious distinction, it is not to be wondered at that a man endued with such moral and intellectual qualities should gradually acquire distinguished ascendency. Obstructions and difficulties, indeed, he encountered at the outset of his career; but they gradually gave way to the energy of his character, and at length formed a vantage-ground, on which he stood more preeminent. By slow degrees, by a continual series of virtuous exertions, and a patient and unremitted perseverance in well-doing, he acquired a degree of influence over all classes of society, which has been the lot of few individuals. Whatever was the subject of dispute, the eminence of Mr. Robinson's services was never called in question; and however discordant the sentiments and feelings of the public on other topics, they perfectly coalesced in the homage due to his worth. To the veneration in which he was so generally held, may be ascribed the principal part of that freedom from party animosities, of that concord and harmony, which have for a long period so happily distinguished this town. The deference due to his opinion on all occasions of difficulty, the unbought tribute of esteem and affection claimed by his worth, we delighted to pay. We felt gratified on finding such a rock on which we could repose our confidence, such a great example of what is most dignified in human nature, on which we could fix our eyes. By a reflex act, the virtuous part of the community felt better pleased with themselves, in proportion as they became susceptible of love and admiration towards an object so fitted, on every principle of reason and religion, to command them.

Though I have had the honour of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Robinson for upwards of thirty years, it is comparatively but of late that I had an opportunity of contemplating him more nearly. While placed at a distance, I admired him as one of the remote luminaries, which adorn the hemisphere: I certainly perceived him to be a star of the first magnitude; but no sooner was I stationed upon the spot, than I became sensible of the lustre of his beams, felt the force of his attraction, and recognized in him the sun and centre of the system. His merit was not of that kind which attracts most admiration at a distance. It was so genuine and solid, that it grew in estimation the more closely it was inspected. It is possible some men may have extended their influence to a wider circle, and moved in a more extended sphere. But where influence is diffused beyond a certain limit, it becomes attenuated in proportion to its diffusion; it operates with an energy less intense. Mr. Robinson completely filled as large a sphere of personal agency as is, perhaps, possible to an individual. He left no part of it unoccupied, no insterstices unsupplied, and spread himself through it with an energy in which there was nothing irregular, nothing defective, nothing redundant.

Our deceased friend was eminently distinguished by a steady uniformity of conduct. While he appeared to multiply himself by the extent and diversity of his exertions, the principles upon which they were conducted, the objects they were destined to promote, were invariably the same. He was not active at intervals, and at other times torpid and inert; he did not appear the public man at one time, and at another absorbed in selfish pursuits: his efforts to do good in season and out of season were constant, and his course knew no other variety than that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His goodness, founded on principle and corroborated by habit, operated with the steadiness of a law of nature, the beneficial results of which can never be sufficiently appreciated till they are suspended. They who contemplated Mr. Robinson at

the distance of forty years, viewed him with the same emotions which he excited at a more advanced age, moderated, however, and chastised, by the apprehension that it was possible some unexpected temptation might occur to divert him from his career. We have seen it completed, we have witnessed his perseverance and his conquest, and have seen his virtues and his fame placed under the safeguard and seal of death and immortality.

Though he had reached that period of life which constitutes old age, it was a *cruda viridisque senectus.* His age had impaired little or nothing of his vigour; its chief effect was that of imparting additional dignity to his countenance and weight to his character. He fell like a noble tree, after two or three strokes, with all his sap and verdure, with extended boughs and rich foliage, while thousands were reposing under his shadow and partaking of his fruits. Seldom has death gained a richer spoil than in the extinction of the earthly existence of this admirable man.

Having expatiated so largely on the eminent benefits accruing to mankind from the services of our departed friend, let me request your attention for a few moments longer, while I endeavour to portray more distinctly the leading features of his character. The predominant property of his mind, intellectually considered, appeared to me to be a strong and masculine understanding, copious in its resources, versatile in its operations, and eminently prompt in its decisions. He saw with a rapid glance the different bearings of a subject, and the proper measures to be adopted in the most intricate concerns. He possessed good sense in an exquisite degree, rarely, if ever, misled by the illusions of imagination, either in himself or others. To this was united a warmth and vivacity of temperament, which made business his delight, action his element; accompanied with a resolution in his pursuits, not to be relaxed by fatigue, nor damped by discouragements, nor retarded by difficulties. To resolve and to execute, or at least to make a vigorous attempt, were with him the same thing. He joined in an eminent degree the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo;* none

more inflexible in his purposes, none more conciliating in his manners. Without losing a particle of his dignity, without meanness, artifice, or flattery, he knew how to adapt himself to all sorts of society, and was equally acceptable in the character of the saint, the sage, and the cheerful engaging companion. By his amenity of manners and benignity of mind, he smoothed the asperity of contradiction, and left to the machine of public business the least possible friction.

It is almost unnecessary to state, that he laid the foundation of public confidence in his integrity, which was such that it was not only never sacrificed, but, as far as my information extends, never suspected. They who might differ from him the most on some subjects, of a religious or political nature, never called in question the honesty of his intentions. To this he joined, as a necessary instrument of success in active life, an uncommon share of prudence: by which I mean not that timid policy which creeps along the shore, without venturing to commit itself to the ocean; which shuns danger, without aspiring to conquest; his prudence was of a more generous and enlarged sort,—the result not so much of calculation at the moment, as of well-regulated passions and established principles. He loved mankind too well to betray or speak evil of any. Vanity never made him loquacious, nor pride capricious. Having purified his mind, under the influence of religion, from vanity, pride, and resentment, the chief temptations to imprudence were precluded. His ardent mind left him no leisure for trifling, nor the great object he so steadily pursued the least disposition to mingle with the details of scandal, or the privacies of domestic life.

The foundation of all these virtues was laid in christian piety. It was this which formed the basis of his character, and directed and regulated his pursuits. His piety was warm, manly, enlightened; at an equal distance from the moroseness of bigotry, the weakness of superstition, and the intemperate sallies of enthusiasm. His character is a practical illustration of the efficacy of the Bible, of which he was a humble and diligent stu-

dent, whence he deduced his principles and formed his maxims. Religion with him was not an occasional feeling, but an habitual element; not a sudden or transient impulse, but a permanent principle, a second nature, producing purity of intention, elevation of mind, and an uninterrupted series of useful exertions. Had he been spared to attend this anniversary, he would undoubtedly have delighted us by an impressive exhibition of the excellencies of revealed truth. Providence has adopted another mode of instruction; and now invites us to learn from his life, and from his death, the lessons we are no longer permitted to hear from his lips. He, being dead, yet speaketh;—he speaks in his writings, he speaks from his tomb, and points to that volume which it is the object of this assembly to circulate, as the source of all his virtues and of all his greatness. After exhibiting, for our imitation, the lives of the holy men recorded in scripture,—men of whom the world was not worthy,—it has pleased God to present to our attention his own, formed on the same model, and replete with the same spirit. The reader of "Scripture Characters" will be powerfully impelled to copy their example, by the reflection that there are few of their excellencies which their Biographer did not attain; that they were shown in his life with no less advantage than in his writings; and that, in his most popular work, he did nothing more than inculcate by his pen what he was incessantly enforcing by his practice.

The loss which the church of Christ has sustained by the extinction of such a luminary is great; the loss to this populous town and neighbourhood irreparable. Ages may revolve ere a similar calamity occurs. The shepherd is torn from his flock; the spiritual father from his children; the sage counsellor, the patron of the poor and the destitute, and the great example of the power of religion, whose very countenance could not be beheld without tender veneration, is no more. The name of Robinson will long combine with the mention of this place a train of solemn emotions, and the stranger will indulge a pious curiosity in inspecting the spot where

he dwelt, and the church where he exercised his ministry.

We knew the precarious tenure by which we possessed him, in common with all other blessings; we knew he was mortal; but, notwithstanding we received repeated warnings by a succession of attacks, few had sufficient fortitude steadily to realize the approaching event. When the intelligence was circulated through the town —"Mr. Robinson is dead!" "Mr. Robinson is dead!" it was a thunderclap: it produced a sensation of dismay and astonishment, as though we scarcely believed to be possible what we knew to be certain; and such an air of desolation and sorrow was impressed upon the countenance of the inhabitants, that a *stranger* must have perceived they had sustained no ordinary calamity. It was such as no event could have produced, but the removal of a saint and a prophet. Whoever wishes to learn how much piety dignifies a character, how much sainted worth, in its power over the heart, preponderates over every other species of eminence, let him turn to this scene, and compare the tears of a populous neighbourhood with the unmeaning decorations of funereal grandeur. None *spoke* of his virtues, none was *eloquent* in his praise; every heart was *oppressed* with a sense of its loss.

I cannot close this address without remarking that the possession of such a man as Mr. Robinson incurs a proportionable weight of responsibility; and that the time is approaching when it will be inquired what improvement we have derived from the exercise of such talents, and the exhibition of such an example.

It is incumbent on his hearers especially to reflect, that he who watched for souls is gone to give an account not only of the principles on which *he* conducted, but of the reception *they* gave to his embassy, and, that against the impenitent and unbelieving, he is compelled to be "a swift witness before God." His warning voice, his pathetic appeals and expostulations, will be heard no more, but his record is on high, and the ministry he so long exercised amongst us, will infallibly be a savour of

life unto life, or of death unto death. His life was not so properly employed, as consumed, in the incessant labour to bring sinners to repentance; and awful will be the doom of those who persist in rejecting the overtures of mercy, the word of reconciliation, dispensed with such admirable zeal, ability, and address.

To the pastoral cares, studies, and instructions, of this most eminent servant of God, death has put a final termination; but the enjoyment of such a ministry, and even the opportunity of witnessing such an example will form a conspicuous feature in our probation, and be replete with consequences which stretch into eternity.

Permit me to indulge one more reflection: the life and ministry of this great man of God affords a demonstration of the futility of the clamour which is raised against the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith; as though it tended to relax the obligations to virtue, and to annul the commands of God. Who ever insisted on this doctrine more constantly, or urged its importance more earnestly, than he? and where, amongst its opponents, shall we discover indications of similar usefulness? Through a period of more than forty years, he employed himself in beating down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, in evincing the impossibility of being accepted on the footing of our own works, and in directing men of every description to seek for pardon in the blood of the cross. If there were any one topic on which he delighted to dwell more than others, this was unquestionably the topic.

To his manly and unsophisticated understanding, it was evident to a demonstration, that repentance must be grafted on humility; and that there was no room to apprehend his hearers would be tempted to contemn the authority, in consequence of being abased before the majesty, of God. He was also perfectly convinced that the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, was the only effectual balm for afflicted consciences. On these principles he conducted his ministry for near half a century, and we may challenge his enemies, (if there be any remaining,) to deny that its fruits were most salutary.

If the apostolic doctrine, which affirms that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, possess the tendency to licentiousness which its opponents ascribe to it, that tendency could not have failed to operate under a course of instruction so long continued, and of which the tenet in question formed so distinguishing a feature. "By their fruits ye shall know them: men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles."

To conclude: the fittest improvement we can make of the melancholy event we are now deploring, will be a serious attention to the exhortation of St. Paul, addressed to primitive christians on the loss of eminent pastors:—"Remember them which have had the rule over you; and, considering the end of their conversation, imitate their faith."

FRAGMENT.

CHARACTER OF THE REV. JOHN SUTCLIFF.

[Written in 1814. Not published before.]

A sweet humility formed a very distinguishing feature in his character. Who ever witnessed, in our deceased brother, those airs of arrogance, or that fondness for display, which are frequently found in persons of very inferior talents and acquirements to those which he possessed? In truth, his aversion to ostentation might alone be said to be carried to excess, since it prevented him, in his public ministry, from availing himself of [those] ample stores of knowledge by which he could often have delighted and instructed his hearers. He had far more learning than the mere hearer of his discourses would have conjectured; for he seemed almost as anxious to conceal as some are to display.

Nor was it in this particular alone that his humility was apparent. It diffused itself over the whole of his character and deportment, and gave it a certain beauty which [no] artifice could successfully imitate. His humility was not displayed in depreciating his performances, nor in speaking of himself in degrading terms: it appeared rather in forgetting himself, and in a natural readiness to give others the superiority. It accompanied him so incessantly, that he might truly be said to "be clothed with humility."

As his disposition little inclined him to ecstasy and rapture, so his piety shone with a mild and steady lustre, perfectly free from the false fire of enthusiasm,

and equally from a lukewarm formality. There were few men in whom it appeared more natural, or more manifestly as a principle interwoven with the inmost texture of his mind. His great modesty seldom permitted him to advert to his own experience, either in public discourse, or in more private conversation; but a savour of experimental piety pervaded his whole character.

The mild and placid cheerfulness which marked his countenance and deportment, would lead us to suppose that he habitually walked in the divine light; and the evidences of his interest in the divine favour were rarely, if ever, impaired or eclipsed. He was one of the few men whose cheerfulness appeared to be increased by age; verifying, in this particular, the description given of "the path of the just, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." His life was truly exemplary, being filled up with an uninterrupted series of useful, benevolent, and pious actions, proceeding from their true principles, and distinguished by an eminent decorum of time and place. He was a pattern to believers, "in faith, in purity, and in conversation." Though rather the opposite to loquacious, he had a high relish for the pleasures of christian society, in which it is difficult to say whether he imparted or received most pleasure. "The law of kindness was on his tongue;" and so attentive was he on every occasion to the feelings of those with whom he conversed, that his company was both inoffensive and delightful.

Through a long series of years his attendance at the association, and at ministers' meetings, was so constant and punctual, that his occasional absence was severely felt; and that meeting seemed essentially defective, which was not graced with his presence. His appearance amongst us was hailed as a certain presage of harmony and love. Multitudes can witness the deep and pungent regret experienced at the last annual association, at the melancholy tidings of that fatal illness which prevented his attendance.

Few men took a deeper interest than our deceased brother in the general state of the church, and the propagation of the gospel abroad. The future glory of the kingdom of Christ, and the best means of promoting it, were his favourite topics, and usurped a large part of his thoughts and his prayers; nor was he ever more in his element, than when he was exerting his powers in devising plans for its extension. The baptist mission in India is under incalculable obligations to his sagacity and prudence.

MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. THOMAS TOLLER.

[WRITTEN IN 1821.]

THE subject of the following Memoir was born at South Petherton, a populous village in Somersetshire, A. D. 1756. His parents were John and Mary Toller, whose maiden name was Northcote. His father was an attorney of eminence, two of whose sons were educated for that profession. Of the early years of Thomas, the subject of the following narrative, I have little information, farther than that both his parents were eminently pious, and that he always considered himself indebted, under God, for his first religious impressions, to the tender solicitude of his mother for the promotion of his eternal welfare. Whether those impressions issued at that period in genuine conversion is not known: nor are we possessed of any authentic information of the circumstances connected with that event. The extreme diffidence and modesty which distinguished Mr. Toller, probably prevented his relating to his nearest friends the early exercises of his mind on religious subjects: the consequence is, that in this instance, as in many others, we are left to infer the reality of the change from its effects. The light and insinuations of the Divine Spirit so often accompany the conduct of a strictly religious education, that some of the most eminent Christians have acknowledged themselves at a loss to assign the precise era of their conversion; but whether

this was the case with our excellent friend, it is impossible to say.

At the early age of fifteen, his parents sent him to the academy at Daventry in Northamptonshire, over which Dr. Ashworth, the worthy successor of the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, presided: his assistant in the academy was the Rev. Mr. Robins, who afterwards occupied the same station with distinguished ability. Of both his tutors he was wont to speak in terms of high respect: of Mr. Robins he was often heard to say, that he considered him as the wisest and the best man he ever knew. Among many other mental endowments, he was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and, perhaps, my reader will excuse my observing, that the first perception of these qualities which the writer of these lines remembers to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach at Northampton on a public occasion. It is to be lamented that he has left none of those productions behind him, which a correct and beautiful imagination, embodied in language of the most classic purity, rendered so impressive and delightful. The qualities of his heart corresponded to those of his genius; and though, long before his death, his bodily infirmities obliged him to relinquish a commanding station and retire into obscurity, he retained to the last such an ascendency over the minds of his former pupils, and such an interest in their affections, as nothing but worth of the highest order can command.

To return from this digression. At the time of Mr. Toller's admission into the Daventry academy, the literary reputation of that seminary was higher than that of any among the dissenters; but, partly owing to a laxness in the terms of admission, and partly to the admixture of lay and divinity students, combined with the mode in which theology was taught, erroneous principles prevailed much; and the majority of such as were educated there became more distinguished for their learning than for the fervour of their piety, or the purity of their doctrine. The celebrated Priestley speaks of the state of the academy, while he resided there, with great complacency: nothing, he assures us, could be more favourable to the progress of free inquiry; since, both the tutors and students were about equally divided between the orthodox and arian systems. The arguments by which every possible modification of error is attempted to be supported, were carefully marshalled in hostile array against the principles generally embraced; while the Theological Professor prided himself on the steady impartiality with which he held the balance betwixt the contending systems, seldom or never interposing his own opinion, and still less betraying the slightest emotion of antipathy to error, or predilection to truth. Thus a spirit of indifference to all religious principles was generated in the first instance, which naturally paved the way for the prompt reception of doctrines indulgent to the corruption, and flattering to the pride, of a depraved and fallen nature.

To affirm that Mr. Toller derived no injury, from being exposed at so tender an age to this vortex of unsanctified speculation and debate, would be affirming too much, since it probably gave rise to a certain general manner of stating the peculiar doctrines of the gospel which attached chiefly to the earlier part of his ministry; though it is equally certain that his mind, even when he left the academy, was so far imbued with the grand peculiarities of the gospel, that he never allowed himself to lose sight of the doctrine of the cross, as the only basis of human hope.

Of the conduct of his academical studies, nothing memorable is recorded. From a very accomplished man, who I believe was his fellow-student, I have merely heard that he had no relish for the mathematics; a circumstance which has been often recorded in the biography of men of indisputable intellectual preeminence.

After a residence at Daventry of four years, he was appointed to supply a destitute congregation at Kettering, where he preached for the first time, October 1, 1775; and his services proved so acceptable, that, after repeated visits, he was invited to take up his permanent residence with them, with which he complied in June of the

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ensuing year, and was ordained pastor, May 28, 1778. On his first coming to Kettering, the church was in a divided and unsettled state. His immediate predecessor was a gentleman of the name of Fuller, who, at the end of two years, in consequence of much dissension in the church, resigned the pastoral charge. Mr. Fuller was preceded by the Rev. Mr. Boyce, who sustained the pastoral office for a long series of years with the highest reputation and success, and whose death was deplored as an irreparable calamity, leaving it very improbable that a successor could be speedily found, capable of uniting the suffrages of a people whose confidence and esteem he had so long exclusively enjoyed. Such is the imperfection of the present state, that the possession of a more than ordinary portion of felicity is the usual forerunner of a correspondent degree of privation and distress; and the removal of a pastor who has long been the object of veneration generally places a church in a critical situation, exposed to feuds and dissensions, arising out of the necessity of a new choice. That of Mr. Toller, notwithstanding his extreme youth, was nearly unanimous. When he first supplied the congregation, nothing was more remote from his expectation than being invited to a permanent residence: his highest ambition was to be tolerated as a transient supply; and when, to his no small surprise, they made choice of him as their stated minister, he entered on that office with that heartfelt conviction of its importance, and unfeigned distrust of his own sufficiency, which are the surest omen of success. He commenced his career with fear and trembling; and, instead of being elated by the preference shown him by a large and respectable society, he was ready to sink under the weight of his responsibility.

Few men probably have been more indebted for the formation of their character to the fervent piety of their audience. Such was the state of his mind at that period, that, had he been connected with a people of an opposite character, his subsequent history would have exhibited, in all probability, features very dissimilar from those which eventually belonged to it. If, in a lengthened ministerial course, the people are usually formed by their pastor, in the first stage it is the reverse; it is the people who form the minister. Mr. Toller often expressed his gratitude for that merciful providence which united him at so early a period with a people adapted to invigorate his piety, and confirm his attachment to the vital, fundamental truths of christianity. The reciprocal influence of a minister and a congregation on each other, is so incessant, and so powerful, that I would earnestly dissuade an inexperienced youth from connecting himself with a people whose doctrine is erroneous, or whose piety is doubtful, lest he should be tempted to consult his ease by choosing to yield to a current he would find it difficult to resist. To root up error, and reclaim a people from inveterate habits of vice and irreligion, is unquestionably a splendid achievement; but it requires a hardihood of character and decision of principle not often found in young persons.

Little variety must be looked for in the subsequent sketch of Mr. Toller's life. As he travelled little, and seldom mingled in the scenes of public business,—as his habits were domestic and his disposition retired; years glided away, without presenting an occurrence of sufficient magnitude to entitle it to a permanent record. Through a long series of years, he persevered in the exemplary discharge of his spiritual functions, among a people who, in proportion as his talents unfolded themselves, regarded him with increasing love and veneration, as well on account of his ministerial qualifications, as his amiable, prudent, and consistent deportment. He was the centre of union to a large and an extensive circle of ministers and of people, who, however they might differ in other particulars, unanimously concurred in their admiration of his talents, and their esteem of his virtues. He was surrounded by friends who vied with each other in demonstrations of respect, and by an audience who looked forward to each succeeding sabbath as to a mental feast, and who hung upon his lips with an attention which might have tempted a stranger to

ensuing year, and was ordained pastor, May 28, 1778. On his first coming to Kettering, the church was in a divided and unsettled state. His immediate predecessor was a gentleman of the name of Fuller, who, at the end of two years, in consequence of much dissension in the church, resigned the pastoral charge. Mr. Fuller was preceded by the Rev. Mr. Boyce, who sustained the pastoral office for a long series of years with the highest reputation and success, and whose death was deplored as an irreparable calamity, leaving it very improbable that a successor could be speedily found, capable of uniting the suffrages of a people whose confidence and esteem he had so long exclusively enjoyed. Such is the imperfection of the present state, that the possession of a more than ordinary portion of felicity is the usual forerunner of a correspondent degree of privation and distress; and the removal of a pastor who has long been the object of veneration generally places a church in a critical situation, exposed to feuds and dissensions, arising out of the necessity of a new choice. That of Mr. Toller, notwithstanding his extreme youth, was nearly unanimous. When he first supplied the congregation, nothing was more remote from his expectation than being invited to a permanent residence: his highest ambition was to be tolerated as a transient supply; and when, to his no small surprise, they made choice of him as their stated minister, he entered on that office with that heartfelt conviction of its importance, and unfeigned distrust of his own sufficiency, which are the surest omen of success. He commenced his career with fear and trembling; and, instead of being elated by the preference shown him by a large and respectable society, he was ready to sink under the weight of his responsibility.

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suppose they were hearing him for the first time or the last. From the commencement of his residence at Kettering, the attachment of his people went on still increasing, till it arrived at a point beyond which it would have been idolatry. This extraordinary attachment must be ascribed partly to the impression produced by his public services, and partly to the gentleness and amenity of his private manners. It may be possible to find other preachers equally impressive, and other men equally amiable; but such a combination of the qualities calculated to give the ascendant to a public speaker, with those which inspire the tenderness of private friendship, is of rare occurrence.

The leisure which the retired and tranquil tenour of his life secured, he employed in the perusal of the best authors in our language, which, by continually adding to his mental stores, imparted to his ministry an ample and endless variety. Although he almost invariably preached from notes composed in short-hand, his immediate preparations for the pulpit, there is reason to believe, were neither long nor laborious. His discourses were not the painful productions of a barren mind, straining itself to meet the exigencies of the moment; but, gathered from a rich and cultivated soil, they were a mere scantling of the abundance which was left behind. He considered every new accession to the stock of his ideas, every effort of reflection, as a preparation for the pulpit; and looked upon those who are necessitated to afford a portion of periodical instruction every week, without having accumulated mental stores, as in much the same situation with the Israelites who were doomed to produce their tale of bricks without straw. Preachers of this description may, indeed, amass a heap of glittering and misplaced ornaments, or "beat the air" with the flourishes of a tumid, unmeaning rhetoric; but the deficiency of real matter, of solid information, cannot fail eventually, to consign them to contempt. Whether Mr. Toller was ever a severe student, or ever was engaged in a regular and systematic pursuit of the different branches of literature or of science, I cannot ascertain; but that he was much devoted to reading is matter of notoriety. By the incessant accumulation of fresh materials, he became "a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and, "like a wise householder," was enabled "to bring out of his treasures things new and old." The settlement of Mr. Fuller, the venerable secretary of the Baptist Mission, in the same place, by giving scope to a virtuous emulation, was probably equally beneficial to both parties. From the absence of competition, and the abundance of leisure attending a country retirement, the mental faculties are in danger of slumbering; the rust of sloth too often blunts their edge, and impairs their brightness; which nothing could be more fitted to counteract, than the presence of such a man as Mr. Fuller, distinguished for constitutional ardour and industry.

In the year 1793, he entered into the married state with Miss Elizabeth Gale, the eldest daughter of Mr. William Gale, who then resided at Cranford, in the neighbourhood of Kettering. By this lady he had two children; John, who died in his infancy, and Thomas, who still survives him, and, under the most pleasing auspices, succeeds his father in the pastoral office. During the short period of this union, he appears to have enjoyed the highest degree of connubial felicity; but, not long after the birth of her second child, Mrs. Toller betrayed symptoms of consumption, and, after languishing a considerable time under the attack of that incurable malady, through the whole of which her ardent attachment to her husband, and profound submission to the will of God, were most conspicuous, she expired on the 15th of September, 1796.

It was about this period of his life that my acquaintance with him commenced. I had known him previously, and occasionally heard him; but it was at a season when I was not qualified to form a correct estimate of his talents. At the time referred to, we were engaged to preach a double lecture at Thrapstone, nine miles from Kettering; and never shall I forget the pleasure and surprise with which I listened to an expos-

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It will be always considered, by those who witnessed it, as affording as high a specimen as can be easily conceived of the power of a preacher over his audience, the habitual, or even frequent recurrence of which, would create an epoch in the religious history of the world.

During this interview, he was invited by the writer of these lines to pay a visit to his friends at Cambridge: with that invitation he shortly after complied. His health had long been much impaired, and serious apprehensions had been entertained, by others as well as by himself, of his being far advanced in a decline. By his excursion to Cambridge, however, in the course of which he met with the most flattering attentions from all quarters, his spirits were revived, his health improved, and from that time the symptons of disease gradually subsided. During his visit, he afforded the people at Cambridge and its vicinity several opportunities of hearing him; and on no occasion was he heard without admiration and delight: for, though no single discourse was equally impressive with that which was delivered at Bedford, he sustained, to the full, the high reputation he had acquired; nor will the numerous and respectable congregations he addressed ever cease to consider this as one of the most favoured seasons of their lives. From that time his celebrity as a preacher was diffused through a much wider circle than before; he began universally to be esteemed one of the most distinguished ministers of the age; a character which he maintained with undiminished lustre to the end of his life.

He continued a widower till the year 1803, when he took for his second wife Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Mr. William Wilkinson of Northampton, by whom he had five children, Richard, William, Joseph, Henry, and George, all of whom, together with their mother survive him. To what degree this union contributed to the happiness of the latter stages of his life, the delicacy due to a most amiable woman, whose humility renders her as averse to receive praises as she is careful to deserve them, forbids me to say. Suffice it to observe that,

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notwithstanding the disparity of years, there never was a connexion which more completely realized the highest anticipations of the friends of both parties.

In the year 1799, the congregation assembling in Carter-lane, London, under the pastoral care of the excellent Mr. Taylor, wanting a supply for one part of the day, applied to Mr. Toller, and offered him, for one service only, a salary considerably beyond what he then enjoyed. To this invitation he gave a decided negative. In the beginning of the following year, the congregation at Clapham gave him a similar invitation, which he also declined. The two congregations then united their invitations, offering a large salary on condition of his undertaking a single service at each place. This joint application he refused. The people of Kettering, hearing of these repeated attempts to remove him, became justly alarmed; a few of them waited upon him, informing him of the uneasiness they felt at the repeated attempts which had been made, and were still making, to effect a separation. They assured him of his entire possession of the hearts of his people, and that, though their situation did not permit their making such proposals as the other parties, they would do all in their power, and most gladly rectify any circumstances which gave him uneasiness. His reply was, that, if he found his services still acceptable, no pecuniary advantages should ever tempt him to relinquish his charge. At the same time he intimated that, as the two congregations still persisted in their application, he wished his people publicly to express their sentiments on the subject, that he might be armed with conclusive reasons for declining invitations so earnestly and repeatedly urged. This gave occasion to three separate addresses, from the young people, from the members of the Benevolent Society, and from the congregation at large, each expressive of the high esteem they entertained for his character, their sense of the benefit derived from his ministry, and their extreme reluctance to resign advantages which they so highly prized. To these addresses a most affectionate and appropriate reply was made by their pastor, in

which he assured them of his unalterable attachment, together with his final determination to accede to their wishes; and thus ended the last attempt to remove Mr. Toller from his station.

The reader will naturally be surprised to find that on this occasion no address was presented by the church. As this omission cannot with a shadow of probability be ascribed to indifference on their part, it must be imputed to the church not occupying that rank in the esteem of the auditory to which it is justly entitled. In every christian congregation, the church ought to be regarded as the principal object, to which the auditory are but an appendage, and for a union with which it should be their highest ambition to become qualified. Congregations are the creatures of circumstances; churches the institution of God: and, if we adhere to the maxims and examples of scripture, and of primitive antiquity, in all religious proceedings their judgement will first be consulted, and their official character recognised. But here we meet with a transaction of great moment, in which three classes of persons, to which no function is assigned in the New Testament, act a conspicuous part, while the church is wholly overlooked. My reason for animadverting on this procedure is, that, in the economy of modern dissenters, a growing tendency may be perceived to merge the church in the congregation, and to commit the management of the most weighty matters to a body of subscribers in preference to the members; an innovation, should it generally prevail, productive of incalculable evils. Many of those who compose the auditors, in distinction from the church, may possess genuine piety; but while they persist in declining to make a public profession of Christ, it is scarcely possible for them to give proof of it: the greater part, it is no breach of candour to suppose, are men of the world; and, surely, it requires little penetration to perceive the danger which religion must sustain, by transferring the management of its concerns from persons decidedly religious to those whose pretensions to interfere are founded solely on pecuniary considerations. The presumptuous

intermeddling of worldly, unsanctified spirits, with ecclesiastical concerns, has been the source of almost every error in doctrine, and enormity in practice, that has deformed the profession of christianity from the time of Constantine to the present day; nor is dissent of much importance, except as far as it affords an antidote to this evil. The system which confounds the distinction between the church and the congregation has long since been carried to perfection in the Presbyterian denomination; and we all know what preceded, and what has followed that innovation.—the decay of piety, the destruction of discipline, a most melancholy departure, in a word, both in principle and in practice, from genuine christianity.

No event contributed more to make Mr. Toller extensively known beyond the limits of the dissenting connexion, than the active part which he took in promoting the objects of the Bible Society. Strongly impressed with the truth of our Lord's declaration, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," and constitutionally averse to every thing noisy and ostentatious, it was rarely that he could be prevailed upon to engage in those popular religious societies, the existence of which may be said to constitute an era in the history of religion. Of societies even formed for the propagation of christianity in foreign parts, he was more disposed to admire the zeal that animated the exertions, than to anticipate the success, having formed an opinion that the final triumph of the gospel over paganism was destined to be effected by the renewal of those miraculous gifts which attended its first promulgation.

But the Bible Society, by the simplicity of its object, and the comprehensive catholicism of its constitution, so consonant to the unbounded liberality of his views, commanded his unqualified approbation; and having been chosen one of the secretaries for the Northern Auxiliary Branch, in the county of Northampton, from its first formation, he directed the entire force of his mind to it; attending regularly, as long as his health would permit, the various meetings held in the vicinity. The sensa-

tion produced by his speech at the first meeting at Northampton, where his grace the Duke of Grafton presided, will never be forgotten. Departing from the usual practice on such occasions, he addressed a considerable part of it to the noble chairman, contrasting his then situation with that which he occupied in the House of Lords; a task which, difficult as it was, he performed with a dignity, pathos, and decorum, that astonished and delighted the audience. Its effect on the duke himself was to draw tears from his eyes, and induce him to double his original donation. In strokes of sudden pathos, and unpolished grandeur, Mr. Toller was almost unequalled; and, as his whole soul was engaged in promoting the Bible Society, on no occasion were his peculiar powers displayed to more advantage.

It has been already remarked, that missionary efforts excited, at their commencement, but little of his attention; not because he was indifferent to their object, but from a settled conviction that the conversion of the heathen was not to be effected by ordinary means, but by miraculous interposition. Whether he entirely relinquished that expectation I am not prepared to say; it is certain his views underwent some modification upon that subject. The astonishing progress of the Bible Society in circulating the Scriptures throughout the world,—the unparalleled exertions of Dr. Carey, and of others, in translating them into the principal languages of the East, and the success of the London Missionary Society in Africa and the South Sea, where whole tribes and nations have been led, by a simultaneous impulse, to abandon their idols, and to worship the one living and true God, opened a new prospect, and convinced him that the general emancipation of the pagan world from the power of darkness, might be accomplished without that supernatural agency which he formerly deemed indispensable. A pertinacious adherence to one mode of thinking, in spite of superior evidence, was no part of his character; and, though not very apt to change his opinion on subjects on which he had long exercised his mind, his firmness was untinctured with obstinacy.

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During the greater portion of his life, he was occasionally liable to great depression of spirits; but, about seven years previous to its close, in consequence of a sudden interruption of the profuse perspiration which had constantly attended his public exercises, and which was thrown back upon the system, he sunk into such a state of despondency as disqualified him, for some time, for the discharge of his ministerial functions. His mind, during this season, was harassed with the most distressing apprehensions of a future state, and possessed with such a view of his pollution, in the sight of a holy God, that he was tempted to suppose all his past experience in religion was delusive. Of his state of mind during this melancholy period, I know not whether he has left any written account; but I recollect, when adverting to it in familiar conversation, he described it as a year of almost incessant weeping and prayer. Though none who were acquainted with him will entertain a doubt of the sincerity of his piety previous to that afflictive visitation, as little can it be doubted that it was a source of great spiritual improvement, that he "did business in the mighty waters," and that he was brought to a more profound knowledge of himself, and a more deep and humble reliance on the power and grace of the Redeemer, than he had before experienced. From that time his discourses were more thoroughly imbued with the peculiarities of the gospel, his doctrinal views more clear and precise, and his whole conversation and deportment such as announced a rapid advance in spirituality. That generality in his statements of revealed truth, which was the consequence of his education at Daventry, and which almost invariably characterized the pupils of that seminary, totally disappeared, and he attained "to all the riches of the full assurance of the mystery of God the Father and of Christ." Though he survived that affliction several years, it probably shortened his life, by giving that concussion to his nervous system from which he never perfectly recovered; and from that time the circulation of his blood appears to have been less regular, and the depression of his spirits more frequent than before.

In the year 1813, the friends of Mr. Toller determined to carry into effect an idea which had before been suggested, that of raising a sum of money to be presented as a testimony of their esteem, as well as with a view to lay the basis of a permanent provision for his family. As soon as he had intelligence of the design, he, in a letter to a gentleman who had taken an active part in the affair, communicated very freely his sentiments on the occasion, in which, without positively declining it, he suggested some objections to the measure, intimating his fear that, by occasioning a diversity of sentiment on its propriety, it might destroy that harmony and cordiality of feeling which had so long prevailed in his connexions. It breathes such a spirit of tenderness, humility, and modesty, that I cannot doubt the reader will be gratified by its insertion.* It is almost unnecessary to add, that the apprehensions and scruples which arose from his extreme delicacy were overruled, and a sum amounting to nearly a thousand pounds was contributed, with a promptitude and alacrity which did equal honour to those who conferred and to him who received the favour. When it is recollected that he had repeatedly resisted the most earnest solicitations to remove to a superior situation, and was charged with the care of a numerous and increasing family, the whole transaction cannot fail to impress the reader with admiration of the liberality in which the donation originated, and of the delicate reluctance with which it was accepted. The desire of wealth never took possession of his mind. Contented and thankful for that decent competence which he was at no time suffered to want, he was frugal without being parsimonious, and generous without profusion.

The system of his life was eminently uniform and tranquil, distinguished by few of the events and vicissitudes which are adapted in the recital to amuse or to

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agitate the reader. In the summer months he frequently rose at a very early hour, and was often met in his solitary walks in the neighbouring woods, by peasants who were "going forth to their work and to their labour till the evening." In these silent and retired scenes he took great delight; and from his observation of the beauties of nature, and the operations of husbandry, he frequently derived those images and illustrations which furnished a rich repast for his audience. Possessed of great sensibility, and a rich and lively imagination, he was accustomed, more than almost any other man, to clothe the abstractions of religion in the garb of sensible images, to illustrate his conceptions by frequent allusions to the most striking scenes in nature and in life. What is said of our Lord may almost be affirmed of him, that he taught the people in parables, and without a parable he spake not unto them. Truth compels me to confess that he sometimes carried this peculiarity to excess; but along with this concession it is but justice to observe, that the habit of appealing to the imagination was not only admirably adapted to a numerous class of subjects, but greatly contributed to that power of delectation which so eminently distinguished his ministry. His discourses were never vapid, tedious, or uninteresting. A certain intensity of devotional feeling, a deep and solemn pathos, accompanied with tones expressive of the greatest sensibility, sustained the attention of the audience in full vigour.

It was his custom, during the greater part of his ministry, to devote the morning service to exposition, in the course of which he went very much at large through the life of Moses and of Christ, each of which occupied him several years. A great part of both Testaments was thus brought before the minds of his hearers. He was strongly impressed with a conviction of the advantages resulting from that mode of instruction, by its affording a more ample variety of topics, imparting a more profound and extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures, and enabling the teacher of religion to introduce many practical remarks, many minute points and details, which

however useful in the conduct of life, would with difficulty find a place in a regular discourse. It is evident from the writings of the Fathers, that this was the primitive mode of preaching, handed down to the christian church from the Jewish synagogue; and, wherever a people are more desirous of acquiring real knowledge than of a momentary excitement, it will be decidedly preferred. Unhappily, the taste of most hearers is the reverse: they are a sort of spiritual epicures, who prefer a poignant and stimulating, to a simple and nourishing diet, and would infinitely rather have their passions awakened than their conscience directed, or their understanding enlarged.

For this reason, expositions will generally be preferred by the intelligent part of an audience, and sermons by a promiscuous multitude. The peculiar talents of Mr. Toller qualified him, above most men, for combining the advantages of both methods, by infusing that degree of pathos and animation into his expository lectures which rendered them little less affecting than his sermons. Though he possessed, there is reason to believe, a competent knowledge of the Scriptures in their original tongues, yet from condescension to his audience, and his extreme abhorrence of whatever savours of pedantry, he was sparing of critical remarks, and availed himself less of the advantages of a liberal education and of incessant reading, for exact interpretations of the sacred volume, than he might with unexceptionable propriety have done. His expositions were practical and popular, not critical or elaborate. In order to preserve a unity of design, and to perpetuate an identity of impression, it was his usual practice to select some portion of the paragraph which he had been expounding in the former part of the day, as the basis of the afternoon discourse.

It would be great injustice to the memory of my invaluable friend, while speaking of his ministerial qualifications, not to mention his striking superiority in the discharge of the devotional part of his public functions, his almost unrivalled eminence in prayer. His addresses to the Supreme Being united every excellence of which they

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are susceptible; they were copious without being redundant, fervent without extravagance, elevated without the least appearance of turgidity or pomp. He poured out his whole soul in an easy unaffected flow of devotional sentiment; adoration seemed to be his natural element; and, as he appeared to lose all consciousness of any other presence but that of the Deity, he seldom failed to raise his audience to the same elevation, to make them realize the feeling of Jacob, when he exclaimed, "How awful is this place!" If this encomium admits of any abatement it must be on the ground of their length, which was not unfrequently equal to that of his sermons. Nor was he less admirable in family devotion: many a time have I been surprised at the promptitude, ease, and grace, with which he would advert to the peculiar circumstances of the family, or of its principal members, with an allusion sometimes to minute incidents, without once impairing the solemnity, or detracting from the dignity, which ought ever to accompany a religious exercise. His petitions in behalf of each individual were stamped with something exclusively proper to his situation or character, so that, while he was concurring in an act of social worship, he felt, ere he was aware, as if he were left alone with God.

In his public discourses, he was apt to limit himself too much for time, either to do full justice to his subject, or to prolong the impression until it had completely incorporated itself with the mind of the hearer: the curtain was let fall at the moment the scene was most interesting; and the current of emotion suddenly checked and interrupted, when it was just rising to its height. The mind is so constituted, that, in order to produce a permanent effect, a train of thought, however interesting, must occupy the attention for a considerable space: the soul kindles by degrees, and must pass through successive gradations of feeling before it reaches the utmost elevation of sublime and pathetic emotion. Hence it is that the most powerful speakers, in every age, have had recourse to a frequent repetition of the same arguments and topics, quite useless on any other account than its

tendency to prolong the impression, and to render it by that means more durable and intense. Had Mr. Toller paid more attention to this principle of our constitution, I will not say he would have been a more interesting and delightful preacher,—for it is not easy to conceive how his sermons could have been much more impressive than they frequently were, during their delivery,—but their power over the audience would probably have been more lasting and more salutary. The defect which we have taken the liberty of noticing, may perhaps be ascribed to the habit of writing his sermons, a practice more favourable to accuracy of language, and condensation of thought, than to copiousness and expansion.

But it is time to return to our narrative, which a few words will despatch. During several of the last years of his life, our excellent friend exhibited symptoms of a tendency to apoplexy; and in the year 1819, as he was going to his study, he was seized with a fit, which appeared instantly to deprive him of all sensation, to the inexpressible alarm of his family. But, before medical aid could be procured, his bodily strength and the possession of his mental powers were restored, and in two hours he displayed no indications of the awful event, except a degree of lassitude, and a slight contortion in the muscles about the mouth, both of which shortly disappeared. This circumstance, it is remarked by one of his friends, afforded a melancholy confirmation of their fears. They had long apprehended the seeds of apoplexy were lurking in his constitution, so that they looked upon this visitation as a voice from God, preparing them, by no doubtful warning, for the speedy dissolution of a connexion which had long been the source of so much improvement and delight.

The circumstances attending the last scene of his life, I cannot give better than in the words of a respectable friend from whom I received the account. "He had," says the writer of the following narrative, "for many years supposed it probable he should be subject to apoplexy or palsy. His fears fixed on the latter: and to his nearest friends he has often said, in allusion to these

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apprehensions, 'I do not fear, on the whole, to die; nor do I fear, I hope, to suffer, if I may but have the needful support from God; but if I am doomed to a long scene of suffering, and to become a burden to myself and friends, I do fear that faith and patience may fail, and that I may at last dishonour the cause I have preached, and the Master whom I serve and love." The attack which has been mentioned removed the fear of palsy almost entirely: he was convinced the disorder was apoplexy; and the consequent conviction that such probably would be his end,—that, without pain or long affliction, he should, when his great Master had done with his services, be thus kindly dismissed,—had an immediate and an exhilarating effect upon his mind. After this he had frequent seizures of the same kind, which lasted for a very short time, seldom more than five minutes in the whole; but they left evident traces on his bodily frame, though they had no other effect upon his mind than to confirm his hope of immediate dismission, "when his work was done." Near the close of the year 1820, one of these attacks left him so weak and shattered in constitution as to convince him he should never be able to resume his full pastoral duties again; and he in a very affectionate manner, communicated this conviction to his people. They immediately sought an assistant, and most naturally turned their attention to the son of their beloved pastor, who had been preaching at Wem, in Shropshire, for some time, but at that moment was visiting his father, to whom he had hurried, in dreadful doubt, from the account that he had received, whether he should see his face any more. From this attack he gradually recovered, and continued for some weeks to gain strength. On Sunday, the 25th of February, he preached in the morning with all his usual animation, from Isa. lxiii. 7—13, and remarked, at the close of the discourse, what encouragement this passage affords the widow and the fatherless to put their trust in God, finishing his last public discourse with these words:

'To thee our infant race we leave;
Them may their fathers' God receive,
That ages yet unborn may raise
Successive hymns of humble praise.'

He spent the evening surrounded by his family, and conversing with his children in a strain of cheerful piety; and, after a night of sound repose, arose as well as usual the next morning. About noon, leaving the parlour, he was found, a few minutes after, in an apoplectic fit, or a seizure resembling apoplexy. Several medical men repaired to the spot, but life was extinct."

His remains were interred in the burying-ground belonging to the meeting-house, on Thursday, the 8th of March. On that occasion, the Rev. Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, engaged in prayer; the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of the same place, delivered the funeral oration; and the writer of these lines endeavoured to improve the providence by a suitable discourse. A considerable number of the clergy in the vicinity, and nearly all the dissenting ministers of the county, attended the procession, which was rendered deeply affecting by the tears of a vast assembly, consisting of all the respectable inhabitants of the town, who felt, on this occasion, that they had lost a father and a friend.

Having already glanced at the most distinguishing features in the character of Mr. Toller, an elaborate delineation of it will neither be necessary nor expected.

It is remarkable, that though he invariably delivered his sermons from notes, to which he strictly adhered, his style of composition was eminently colloquial; it had all the careless ease, negligence, and occasional inaccuracy, which might be looked for in an extemporaneous address. He appears never to have turned his attention to composition as an art; and the force and beauty with which he sometimes expressed himself, was the spontaneous effect of a vivid imagination, accompanying the truest sensibility. His most affecting illustrations (and the power of illustrating a subject was his distinguishing faculty) were drawn from the most familiar scenes of life; and, after he became a father, not

unfrequently from the incidents which attach to that relation. An example of this (supplied by the friend whose words have been already quoted) will afford the reader some idea of the manner in which he availed himself of images drawn from the domestic circle. His text was Isaiah xxvii. 5:—"Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." "I think," said he, "I can convey the meaning of this passage so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my little children had committed a fault for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms, and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault: he had taken hold of my strength, and he had made peace with me."

He possessed great originality, not so much however in the stamina of his thoughts, as in the cast of his imagination. He seldom reminded you of any other speaker to whom he bore the slightest resemblance; his excellences and his defects rendered it equally evident that he had formed himself on no preceding model,—that he yielded without restraint to the native bias of his character and genius. The effect of imitation would, undoubtedly, have been the acquisition of more elegance and correctness, probably at the expense of higher qualities—of that noble simplicity and careless grandeur which were the distinguishing features of his eloquence. In the power of awakening pathetic emotions, he far excelled any speaker it has been my lot to hear. Often have I seen a whole congregation melted under him like wax before the sun: my own feelings, on more than one occasion, have approached to an overpowering agitation. The effect was produced apparently with perfect ease. No elaborate preparation, no peculiar vehemence or intensity of tones, no artful accumulation of pathetic images led the way: the mind was captivated and subdued, it scarcely knew how. Though it will not be imagined that this triumph of popular eloquence could be habitual, much less constant, it may be safely affirmed that a large proportion of Mr. Toller's discourses afforded some indication of these powers.

Of the personal character of the subject of these memoirs, it may be observed, in general, that it was marked by none of the eccentricities which are supposed to be the appendages of genius, and that it consisted of a combination of amiable and pleasing, rather than of striking qualities. Candour, in all the modes of its operation, was a conspicuous feature. As his affection was extended to all, without exception, who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," so he was particularly ingenious in putting the best construction on unfavourable appearances, in extenuating what he could not justify, and in discovering reasons for hoping well of those whom the honest but untempered zeal of many good men would prompt them to condemn. It was his delight to narrow the grounds of debate among sincere christians, to multiply the points of contact, and to detect the indications of spiritual consanguinity and of a common origin, amidst the discrepancies which arise from real diversity of sentiment in some instances, and a diversity of language in more. Whether this benevolent solicitude to comprehend within the pale of salvation as many as possible, may not sometimes have led him to extenuate the danger of speculative error too much, may be fairly questioned. Since the charity which the Scriptures so earnestly inculcate, consists in a real solicitude for the welfare of others, not in thinking well of their state, he cannot be justly accused of a violation of its dictates, who contends that those doctrines are essential to salvation, on which his own hopes of it are exclusively founded.

There is another branch of candour which was eminently exemplified in the subject of the preceding Memoir. His tenderness in whatever concerned individual reputation was remarkable. He felt as much solicitude about the character of the absent as the feelings of the

present: the wanton depreciation of their intellect or their virtue gave him visible pain; and, where he could not speak favourably of either, he was silent. Having no passion for display, he was never tempted to sacrifice his friend to his jest: his gayest sallies never inflicted a pang, nor occasioned a blush. His humour was a gentle and lambent flame, which cheered and exhilarated, but never scorched. Hence few men possessed more friends, or fewer enemies: it may be doubted whether, among the numerous lists of the former, he lost the esteem of one. The friends of his youth who did not descend into the grave before him were the delight and solace of his age; and, in proportion as their ranks were thinned, he wisely consulted his happiness by cultivating the affection of a succeeding generation, by which he escaped that solitude and desertion which is the lot of those who shut their hearts against new attachments, neglect the good within their reach in a hopeless attempt to grasp a phantom, and perversely refuse to attach a value to any other pleasures than those which have withered under the blast of death.

It was not his practice to devote much of his time to ministerial visits. In justification of this part of his conduct, he was accustomed to quote the apostolic injunction: "Is any sick among you? let him *call* for the elders of the church," &c. He possessed, or fancied he possessed, little talent for the ordinary topics of religious conversation; and his extreme aversion to the ostentation of spirituality rendered him somewhat reluctant to engage in those recitals of christian experience in which many professors so much delight. There adhered to his natural disposition a delicacy and reserve, which rendered it impossible for him to disclose, except in the most confidential intercourse, the secret movements and aspirations of his heart towards the best of beings.

He possessed, notwithstanding this, a high relish for the pleasures of society. An inexhaustible fund of anecdote, which he was wont to relate with a dry and comic humour, rendered him, in his livelier moments, a most fascinating companion. A great versatility of features combined with much power of imitation to give a peculiar poignance to the different incidents of his story His imitations however were *specific*, not individual, seldom if ever descending to personal mimickry—an illiberal art, more befitting the buffoon than the christian or the gentleman. Mr. Toller's indulgence of these sallies was occasional, not habitual; they formed at times the seasoning of his conversation, not the staple commodity; and never were they carried so far as to impair the dignity of his character, or the reverence inspired by his virtues. They were invariably such as a virgin might listen to without a blush, and a saint without a sigh.

Mr. Toller was much of a practical philosopher Deeply convinced of the vanity and imperfection of the present state, which he considered less as a scene of enjoyment than as a perpetual conflict with unavoidable evils, he was always disposed to make the best of passing events; to yield where resistance was unavailing; to beguile the sorrows which he could not remove; and, by setting the good against the evil, to blunt the arrows of adversity, and disarm disappointment of its sting. Possessing a genuine but not a sickly sensibility, he [showed it rather] in enduring the vicissitudes of life with equanimity, than in any excessive delicacy or refinement of feeling.

"Speak evil of no man" is an injunction of which he never lost sight; and, without assuming the severity of reproof, he well knew how, by an expressive silence, to mark his aversion to scandal. He showed a constant solicitude to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or the household of God. Hence the efficacy of his ministry was never obstructed or impaired by the personal prejudice of his hearers, who regarded him not only with the deference due to a zealous and enlightened teacher, but with the affection of a friend. He was an ardent lover of peace. On no occasion did he offend by haughtiness, negligence, the indulgence of a capricious humour, or the sallies of intemperate anger. It has been asserted, by some that knew him in early life, that his original dispo-

sition was hasty and irritable. If this was the case, he affords a striking example of the conquest of religion and philosophy over the early tendencies of nature, since few men were equally distinguished by an unaffected sweetness and serenity of temper.

During every period of my acquaintance with him, he exhibited the most decided indications of piety; but in the latter stages of his life, this part of his character shone with distinguished lustre: devotion appeared to be his habitual element. Seldom has religion presented more of the lovely and attractive than in the character of Mr. Toller: if it did not inflame him with the zeal which distinguished more active and enterprising spirits, it melted him into love, clothed him with humility, and decked him, in an eminent degree, with the "ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit."

It has rarely been the privilege of one town, and that not of considerable extent, to possess at the same time and for so long a period, two such eminent men as Mr. Toller and Mr. Fuller. Their merits as christian ministers were so equal, and yet so different, that the exercise of their religious functions in the same place was as little adapted to produce jealousy as if they had moved in distant spheres. The predominant feature in the intellectual character of Mr. Fuller was the power of discrimination, by which he detected the minutest shades of difference among objects which most minds would confound: Mr. Toller excelled in exhibiting the common sense of mankind in a new and impressive form. Mr. Fuller never appeared to so much advantage as when occupied in detecting sophistry, repelling objections, and ascertaining with a microscopic accuracy the exact boundaries of truth and error: Mr. Toller attached his attention chiefly to those parts of christianity which come most into contact with the imagination and the feelings, over which he exerted a sovereign ascendency. Mr. Fuller convinced by his arguments; Mr. Toller subdued by his pathos. The former made his hearers feel the grasp of his intellect; the latter, the contagion of his sensibility. Mr. Fuller's discourses identified themselves,

after they were heard, with trains of thought; Mr. Toller's with trains of emotion. The illustrations employed by Mr. Fuller (for he also excelled in illustration) were generally made to subserve the clearer comprehension of his subject; those of Mr. Toller consisted chiefly of appeals to the imagination and the heart. Mr. Fuller's ministry was peculiarly adapted to detect hypocrites, to expose fallacious pretensions to religion, and to separate the precious from the vile; he sat as "the refiner's fire and the fuller's soap:" Mr. Toller was most in his element when exhibiting the consolations of Christ, dispelling the fears of death, and painting the prospects of eternity. Both were original: but the originality of Mr. Fuller appeared chiefly in his doctrinal statements; that of Mr. Toller in his practical remarks. The former was unquestionably most conversant with speculative truth; the latter perhaps possessed the deeper insight into the human heart.

Nor were the characters of these eminent men, within the limits of that moral excellence which was the attribute of both, less diversified than their mental endowments. Mr. Fuller was chiefly distinguished by the qualities which command veneration; Mr. Toller by those which excite love. Laborious, zealous, intrepid, Mr. Fuller passed through a thousand obstacles in the pursuit of objects of public interest and utility; Mr. Toller loved to repose, delighting and delighted, in the shade of domestic privacy. The one lived for the world; the other for the promotion of the good of his congregation, his family, and friends. An intense zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, sustained by industry that never tired, a resolution not to be shaken, and integrity incapable of being warped, conjoined to a certain austerity of manner, were the leading characteristics of Mr. Fuller: gentleness, humility, and modesty, those of Mr. Toller. The secretary of the Baptist Mission attached, in my opinion, too much importance to a speculative accuracy of sentiment; while the subject of this Memoir leaned to the contrary extreme. Mr. Fuller was too prone to infer the character of men from their

creed; Mr. Toller to lose sight of their creed in their character. Between persons so dissimilar, it was next to impossible a very close and confidential intimacy should subsist: a sincere admiration of each other's talents, and esteem for the virtues which equally adorned them both, secured without interruption, for more than thirty years, those habits of kind and respectful intercourse which had the happiest effect in promoting the harmony of their connexions and the credit of religion.

Much as Mr. Fuller was lamented by the religious public in general, and especially in his own denomination, I have reason to believe there was not a single individual, out of the circle of his immediate relatives, who was more deeply affected by his death than Mr. Toller. From that moment he felt himself nearer to eternity; he accepted the event as a most impressive warning of his own dissolution; and, while a thousand solemn and affecting recollections accompanied the retrospect of a connexion which had so long and so happily subsisted, one of his favourite occupations was to revive a mental intercourse, by the frequent perusal of the sermons of his deceased friend. It is thus that the friendship of high and sanctified spirits loses nothing by death but its alloy: failings disappear, and the virtues of those whose "faces we shall behold no more" appear greater and more sacred when beheld through the shades of the sepulchre. Their spirits are now united before the throne; and if any event in this sublunary scene may be supposed to engage the attention of the subject of this Memoir, in his present mysterious elevation, it is probably the desire that the child of his prayers, who now succeeds him in his office, may surpass his example, and be the honoured instrument of turning more sinners to righteousness, and of conducting more sons to glory, than himself.

MR. TOLLER'S LETTER,

Referred to in p. 301.

My dear Sir,

It would be idle in me to affect ignorance of the business which has principally occasioned your visit to Kettering just now; and though it may seem indelicate to interfere during the discussion of that business, yet I cannot with an easy mind suffer the intended meeting to take place on Monday, without offering a few observations on what may be called, in parliamentary language, "the previous question."

Considering the proposed measure as originating with you and some other friends, I can view it in no other light than as a noble instance of the most unquestionably disinterested friendship and affection; and let the result be what it may, I shall retain a deep and lasting sense of it as such: but, at the same time, I cannot but feel a painful apprehension, that what you mean for nothing but good, should be the incidental occasion of real harm; that is, the probable means of disturbing the harmony and peace which at present exist in my congregation.

There are some amongst us whose inclination would prompt them to support any measure for the benefit of me or my family, but whose general circumstances are, like my own, comfortable and competent: indeed, just sufficient to fill up the annual supply, with a little besides to assist the poor and needy, but who could not advance any thing like a round sum, which would tell on an occasion like this. Some such, I am afraid, would be grieved to contribute nothing; and yet more than a trifle would be a real incon-

venience. There are others in superior circumstances, and by no means backward to do good in the abstract; but who, from education, economical habits, and other causes, have never been accustomed to do so on a large scale; and who, from an apprehension of there being no direct and immediate necessity in the case, would be hurt, and perhaps disgusted, at the suggestion that a handsome sum was expected from them. Now, any instance of this sort would grate more upon my mind than the friendship of others would gratify it; nor could I prevail upon myself to receive a single shilling from a reluctant hand if I knew it, or as the result of solicitation and admonition: and if any thing of the kind goes forward in a way satisfactory to me, it must be on a ground which is hardly attainable, perhaps, in any similar case, namely, that every subscriber be, in the fullest sense, a volunteer; for I can most truly say, that I had a thousand times rather matters should rest as they are, than that the plan should advance a single step at the risk of exciting sensations or producing effects similar to those alluded to above: and therefore, on this ground, if it shall appear to you and other friends prudent to adjourn the further consideration of the business to a future day, be assured that such a resolution will not give me the slightest pain.

I have now told you all my heart, and shall leave the event with Providence and your discretion; only repeating that I shall never cease to admire the principles by which you and others have been actuated, and shall retain a lasting sense of obligation for the kindness of your intention.

I am, with best wishes and prayers,

Yours most affectionately,

THOS. N. TOLLER.

P.S. You are at full liberty to show this letter to whomsoever you think proper: indeed, with that view I write it.

PREFACE TO THE MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. JOSEPH FREESTON.

[WRITTEN IN 1821.]

OF all the species of literary composition, perhaps biography is the most delightful. The attention concentrated on one individual gives a unity to the materials of which it is composed, which is wanting in general history. The train of incidents through which it conducts the reader suggests to his imagination a multitude of analogies and comparisons; and, while he is following the course of events which mark the life of him who is the subject of the narrative, he is insensibly compelled to take a retrospect of his own. In no other species of writing are we permitted to scrutinize the character so exactly, or to form so just and accurate an estimate of the excellencies and defects, the lights and shades, the blemishes and beauties, of an individual mind.

The progress of a human being, in his passage through time to eternity, only requires to be exhibited with fidelity, in order to become an interesting object to a contemplative mind; whatever may have been the moral or intellectual qualities of the individual, and however degraded by vice, or exalted by piety and virtue. Conquests achieved, or objects attained,—conscience cowering under the tyranny of the passions, or asserting her dignity by subjecting them to her sway,—are equally instructive; providing the reader is informed by what steps virtuous

or vicious habits were superinduced, by what stratagems temptation prevailed, or by what efforts and expedients it was repelled. The moral warfare which every rational and accountable creature has to sustain, pregnant with consequences which reach to eternity, possesses an intrinsic and essential importance, totally independent of the magnitude of the events, or the publicity and splendour of the scenes to which it is attached. The moral history of a beggar, which faithfully revealed the interior movements of his mind, and laid open the secret causes which contributed to form and determine his character, might enlarge and enlighten the views of a philosopher. Whatever tends to render our acquaintance with any portion of our species more accurate and profound, is an accession to the most valuable part of our knowledge: and, though to know ourselves has ever been deemed of the most consequence, it may be doubtful whether the power of self-examination is ever exerted with so much vigour as when it is called into action by the exhibition of individual character. The improvement derived from narrative, in this view, will be proportional to the degree in which the objects described, and the incidents related, bear a resemblance to those with which the reader is conversant; and, for this reason, the biography of private persons, though less dazzling, is more instructive to the majority of readers, than that of such as are distinguished by the elevation of their rank and the splendour of their achievements. Few require to be taught the arts by which the favour of princes is conciliated, or the machinations of rival candidates for power defeated; few need to be warned against the errors and mistakes which have produced the loss of battles or the failure of negotiations. Events of this order may fill the imagination, and diffuse their dignity and pathos over the page of history; but they afford little useful instruction to the bulk of mankind. But, when a character selected from the ordinary ranks of life is faithfully and minutely delineated, no effort is requisite to enable us to place ourselves in the same situation: we accompany the subject of the narrative with an interest undiminished by distance, unimpaired by dissimilarity of circumstances: and, from the efforts by which he surmounted difficulties and vanquished temptations, we derive the most useful practical lessons.

He who desires to strengthen his virtue and purify his principles will always prefer the solid to the specious; will be more disposed to contemplate an example of the unostentatious piety and goodness which all men may obtain, than of those extraordinary achievements to which few can aspire; nor is it the mark of a superior, but rather of a vulgar and superficial taste, to consider nothing as great or excellent, but that which glitters with titles or is elevated by rank.

The biography of such as have been eminent for piety has ever been a favourite species of reading with those who possess a devotional spirit. "As face answers to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man." To trace the steps by which a piety feeble in its rudiments has attained to maturity,—to observe the holy arts by which devout habits were strengthened and temptations defeated,—to discern the power of truth in purifying and transforming the minds of such as have attained to high degrees of sanctity,—is equally delightful and edifying. To the real christian, experimental religion opens a new world, replete with objects, emotions, and prospects, of which none but those who are taught of God can form any just or adequate conception; and the joys and sorrows, the elevations and depressions, the dangers and escapes, incident to the spiritual warfare, produce in congenial breasts a lively sympathy.

Publications of this nature have accordingly met for the most part with a welcome reception, and have become one of the most popular and powerful instruments of piety. The religious public have long learned to form a just estimate of the Diary of Mr. Williams, of Kidderminster, an industrious and opulent manufacturer, who demonstrated the possibility of combining a prudent attention to commercial pursuits with a splendid exhibition of the christian graces. The masculine sense, the fervent piety, the active benevolence of that most excel-

lent man, will long contribute to enlighten and to animate christians in a private rank, and to shed a lustre on the religious profession. A more perfect example perhaps was never exhibited to the imitation of active tradesmen. A devotion fervent but rational, zeal tempered by the exactest discretion, and a benevolence invariably regulated by the dictates of prudence and justice,—a transparent candour without weakness, and a wisdom without art,—combine to form a living picture of exalted yet attainable excellence.

The Life and Diary of David Brainerd, missionary to the American Indians, exhibits a perfect pattern of the qualities which should distinguish the instructor of rude and barbarous tribes; the most invincible patience and self-denial, the profoundest humility, exquisite prudence, indefatigable industry, and such a devotedness to God, or rather such an absorption of the whole soul in zeal for the divine glory and the salvation of men, as is scarcely to be paralleled since the age of the apostles. Such was the intense ardour of his mind, that it seems to have diffused the spirit of a martyr over the most common incidents of his life. His constitutional melancholy, though it must be regarded as a physical imperfection, imparts an additional interest and pathos to the narrative; since we more easily sympathize with the emotions of sorrow than of joy. There is a monotony in his feelings, it must be acknowledged, and consequently a frequent repetition of the same ideas, which will disgust a fastidious or superficial reader; but it is the monotony of sublimity.

The Life of Fletcher, of Madeley, affords in some respects a parallel, in others a contrast, to that of Brainerd: and it is curious to observe how the influence of natural temperament varies the exhibition of the same principles. With a considerable difference in their religious views, the same zeal, the same spirituality of mind, the same contempt of the world, is conspicuous in the character of each. But the lively imagination, the sanguine complexion of Fletcher, permits him to triumph and exult in the consolatory truths and prospects

of religion. He is a seraph who burns with the ardours of divine love; and spurning the fetters of mortality, he almost habitually seems to have anticipated the rapture of the beatific vision. Brainerd, oppressed with a constitutional melancholy, is chiefly occupied with the thoughts of his pollutions and defects in the eyes of Infinite Purity. His is a mourning and conflicting piety, imbued with the spirit of self-abasement, breathing itself forth in "groanings which cannot be uttered;" always dissatisfied with itself, always toiling in pursuit of a purity and perfection unattainable by mortals. The mind of Fletcher was habitually brightened with gratitude and joy for what he had attained; Brainerd was actuated with a restless solicitude for farther acquisitions. If Fletcher soared to all the heights, it may be affirmed, with equal truth, that Brainerd sounded all the depths, of christian piety; and while the former was regaling himself with fruit from the tree of life, the latter, on the waves of an impetuous sea, was "doing business in the mighty waters."

Both equally delighted and accustomed to lose themselves in the contemplation of the Deity, they seemed to have surveyed that Infinite Object under different aspects; and while Fletcher was absorbed in the contemplation of infinite benignity and love, Brainerd shrunk into nothing in the presence of immaculate purity and holiness.

The different situations in which they were placed, had probably considerable effect in producing or heightening their respective peculiarities. Fletcher exercised his ministry in the calm of domestic life, surrounded with the beauties of nature; Brainerd pursued his mission in a remote and howling wilderness, where, in the midst of uncultivated savages, he was exposed to intolerable hardships and fatigues.

The religious public have lately been favoured with a rich accession to the recorded monuments of exalted piety, in the Life and Religious Experience of the lamented Henry Martyn. It is delightful to behold, in the history of that extraordinary man, talents, which

attracted the admiration of one of the most celebrated seats of learning, consecrated to the honour of the cross; an enterprising genius, in the ardour of youth, relinquishing the pursuit of science and of fame, in order to travel in the steps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz. Crowned with the highest honours a university could bestow, we see him quit the luxurious shades of academic bowers, for a tempestuous ocean and a burning clime,—for a life of peril and fatigue, from which he could expect no other reward than the heroic pleasure of communicating to perishing millions the word of eternal life. He appears to have formed his religious character chiefly on the model of Brainerd: and as he equalled him in his patience, fortitude, humility, and love, so he strictly resembled him in his end. Both, nearly at the same age fell victims to a series of intolerable privations and fatigues, voluntarily incurred in the course of their exertions for the propagation of the faith of Jesus. And though their death was not a violent one, the sacrifices they made, and the sufferings they endured, entitle them to the honours and rewards of a protracted martyrdom. Their memory will be cherished by the veneration of all succeeding ages; and he who reads their lives will be ready to exclaim, '*Here* is the faith and patience of the saints.'

If the biography of men such as these fails to produce all the benefit we might expect, some will be ready to impute it to that hopeless superiority of character which seems to place them almost above the reach of imitation. The justice of the inference, however, may be fairly questioned, since he who proposes for his imitation a model approaching to perfection, though he may not equal, will, probably, in the fervour of his exertions to copy it, take a higher flight than if he had contented himself with the contemplation of an inferior standard. He who forms his taste on the inimitable productions of a Raphael, will reach nearer to perfection than he could arrive by the study of an inferior artist: and, for the purpose of restoring man to the image of his Maker, the wisdom of God has thought

fit to exhibit a faultless model in the character of the incarnate Redeemer.

Before I dismiss the reader to the perusal of the following narrative, it may not be improper to apprize him of what he is to expect. If he hopes to be amused by the recital of striking occurrences and eventful passages, he will find himself disappointed. The following is not the history of a man bustling on the busy stage of life, and exposed to great vicissitudes of good or evil fortune: it is the simple unpretending narrative of a dissenting minister, who passed his days in the retirement of the country, in tranquil meditation, in the exercise of unostentatious piety, and an assiduous attention to the spiritual improvement of his flock. Though he did not enjoy the benefit of a liberal education, my revered friend was possessed of an active inquisitive mind, which prompted him to devote much of his time to reading, and enabled him to acquire a large fund of general, but especially of theological, knowledge. Few men, in similar circumstances, have availed themselves, to an equal extent, of the information which the best books in our language, on moral and religious subjects, supply. Reading, with him, was not merely a habit, but a passion. His curiosity was not limited within the circle of his profession: he was delighted with works on general literature, and purchased and perused some of the valuable elementary treatises on science. But, as devotion was his peculiar element, it is not to be wondered at that theology in its various branches was his favourite study. Though he was far from neglecting the antiquities and the criticism of theology, as far as they are accessible to a mere English scholar, he placed his principal delight in the perusal of works immediately devoted to the inculcation of doctrinal and experimental religion: and in this pursuit his attention was forcibly drawn to the writings of the puritan divines, who, with all their imperfections of style and method, are unquestionably the safest of all uninspired guides. The masculine sense, the profound learning, the rich and unequalled unction of these fathers of the modern

church, exerted a powerful influence on his mind, and greatly contributed to form and mature his character.

Of the great Mr. Howe, who shines in the firmament with a preeminent and unrivalled lustre, he always spoke in terms of just admiration, assigning him that preference among the nonconformist divines, which it is surprising any one should dispute. The reader of the succeeding narrative will perceive, that for many years it was his constant practice to devote a considerable portion of each day to the perusal of the best practical writers; to which, under God, he was undoubtedly indebted for that habitual spirituality of mind which so remarkably distinguished him, and in which very few, whom I have had the happiness of knowing, appeared to equal; none to surpass him. His sense of the divine presence, his relish for devout meditation and intercourse, his advertence to the great realities of a future life, seemed scarcely ever to forsake him; and the least that can be affirmed of him is, that "he walked with God."

Though he exercised his ministry, through the whole of his life, amongst the general baptists, his sentiments approached nearer to those of Mr. Baxter than to the system of Arminius, nor would his statements of christian doctrine have given the slightest offence to a congregation of moderate calvinists. But to polemical theology he was not attached; his religion was entirely of a practical and experimental character: nor did he attach the smallest importance to correct views of christian doctrine, any further than as they tended to influence the heart. To socinianism, in all its modifications he entertained a most hearty and decided aversion, and few circumstances gave him more poignant uneasiness than to see some of the most conspicuous members of his church embrace and patronise that destructive heresy. In the latter years of his life he devoted a considerable portion of his time to composition; and his tract on Socinianism, his Directions and Encouragements for Travellers to Zion, his Advice to a young Minister, with other publications of a similar tendency,—the result of

long experience, of much well-digested reading, and of patient thought,—will perpetuate and enrol his name among the most useful practical writers of the present day. Fond as he was of retirement, he retained a keen relish for the pleasures of society, for which he was eminently fitted by the gentleness of his manners, the amenity of his temper, and the variety of his knowledge. His conversation expressed and inspired serenity and cheerfulness rather than mirth; and he possessed, to a very extraordinary degree, the happy art of mingling a seasoning of piety with his hours of the greatest relaxation. The natural temperament of my revered friend inclined in some degree, I have been informed, to the irascible; but who ever beheld him betrayed for a moment into language or deportment incompatible with the meekness of the gospel? His exquisite sensibility is abundantly conspicuous in the following narrative, nor could it escape the observation of any person who enjoyed much of his intimacy; but it was so directed and refined, by a higher principle, as to become one of the most attractive qualities in his character.

The extreme depression of the manufacture in the place of his residence, was a source of much uneasiness; both by the intense sympathy he felt for the sufferers, and the degree in which it affected his personal resources. It is painful to reflect that a man "of whom the world was not worthy," perhaps never received from his people more than a moiety of the means of his subsistence: and that, after sinking the greater part of his scanty property, he must often have been involved in irretrievable difficulties, but for the casual liberality of friends whom his superior merit had attached. That, in a situation so full of embarrassment and perplexity, he retained a curiosity so eager, a passion for study and inquiry so unabated, as to induce him to spend a large sum of money in the purchase of books, is a decisive proof of his possessing a mind of no ordinary vigour. But I check myself. It was not my intention to write an encomium on the excellent person who is the subject of

the following Memoir, but merely to introduce it to the reader's attention, by a few prefatory remarks; and, having already trespassed too long on his patience, I must be permitted to close, by expressing my earnest prayer that the effect of its perusal on as many as read it, may be to assimilate their minds, in some degree at least, to the character of its excellent and lamented author.

EXTRACT

FROM MR. HALL'S ROUGH NOTES

OF THE

FUNERAL SERMON FOR DR. RYLAND.

Early in life he formed an intimacy with a set of writers, who, however they may push some theoretical views to excess, are eminent for their elevated ideas of the moral character of the Deity, and for the zeal with which they contend for its influence on doctrinal and practical religion. Firm champions of disinterested love, they set themselves, with the greatest ardour, to expose those religious affections which are founded on mere selfishness, and which are excited merely by the conviction their possessors entertain of their having been the object of the divine predilection, without any perception of the excellence and moral beauty of the divine nature. They laid, as the foundation of all vital religion, a perception of moral beauty, a complacency in the Deity on account of his own intrinsic excellence, which, they contend, is a separate principle from mere gratitude for benefits expected or received, however it may enlarge and extend it. The originality displayed by these writers, at the head of whom the celebrated Edwards is placed by universal consent,—the acumen of their logic, and the fervour of their piety,—seized powerfully on the mind of Dr. Ryland in his early years, and gave a decisive turn to his subsequent studies and pursuits. From that time to the close of his life, the relation which christianity bears

to the display of the divine character was ever present to his thoughts: he delighted in whatever tended to deepen and enlarge his conceptions of that ineffable original; he delighted especially to contemplate him under the character in which John presents him, when he affirms that "God is love,"—as a being possessing an infinite propensity to impart his "fulness," by diffusing the greatest possible sum of happiness throughout his vast dominions. These lofty musings were, with him, not the object of speculation only, or the discriminating features of a creed. He formed the interior of his character upon them; they were his mental aliment, and intimately incorporated with his thoughts. Nor can it be doubted that, in a mind so prepared by divine grace as was his, they exercised a most [beneficial] influence, and produced a luxuriant crop of christian virtues. He appeared to be penetrated with a perpetual sense of the divine presence; not as a source of terror or dismay, but of habitual peace, confidence, and joy. "He endured as seeing him that is invisible." His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity. It was an awful love, such, in a very inferior degree, as the beatific vision must be supposed to inspire, trembling with ecstasy, while prostrate with awe

[*Compare the above with* pp. 64, 65, *and* 56, Vol. V.]

AN ADDRESS,

CIRCULATED AT THE FORMATION OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY, FEBRUARY 19, 1810.

We feel peculiar satisfaction in announcing to the public the formation of an Auxiliary Bible Society at Leicester, the object of which is, to co-operate with the Parent Society in London, in giving as extensive a circulation as possible to the Holy Scriptures. Notwithstanding the diversity of sentiment which unhappily prevails among christians, we may fairly presume on the concurrence of all parties and denominations in promoting a design so disinterested as that of diffusing the light of revelation. In the prosecution of this design, our party is the world; the only distinction we contemplate, is between the disciples of revelation, and the unhappy victims of superstition and idolatry; and as we propose to circulate the Bible without notes or comments, truth only can be a gainer by the measure. To those who confine their views to this country, the want of Bibles may not appear very urgent; but, without insisting on the many thousands even *here* who are destitute of them; it is certain, that in pagan, mahometan, and popish countries, they are extremely rare, and their number totally inadequate, not merely to supply the immense population in those parts, but even the increasing demand which a variety of circumstances have combined to produce. To supply this demand, to whatever extent it may be carried, is the aim of the society in London with which this is designed to co-operate. Their ambition, as far as it may please God

to smile upon their efforts, in, by imparting the Holy Scriptures, to open the fountain of revelation to all nations. It was natural and necessary for the first movement in so great an enterprise to commence at the heart of the empire; nor is it less so, that, having commenced there, it should propagate itself through the larger vessels and arteries to the remotest extremities of the body. We have the pleasure of perceiving, that the example of the metropolis has already been followed in several of our principal towns and cities; and there is room to hope that similar institutions will, ere long, be formed in every part of the kingdom. Nor has the emulation excited been confined to this nation and its dependencies; societies of the same description have been formed at Philadelphia, at Berlin, and at Basle, each of which derives support and assistance from the original one established in the metropolis of Great Britain. While so general an alacrity has been evinced on this occasion, it had ill become the character of the town of Leicester to stand neuter, highly distinguished as it is for its great and ancient respectability, as well as for the extent of its establishments, and exertions in the cause of religion and charity. We have the pleasure of reflecting, that the meeting, so obligingly called by the mayor, was numerously and respectably attended, that the utmost harmony prevailed in its proceedings, and that there appeared throughout an utter oblivion of party distinctions, with an emulation in each individual to promote to the utmost the purposes for which we were convened.

In whatever light we consider the British and Foreign Bible Society, it appears to us replete with utility. Its formation will, we trust, constitute a new æra in the history of religion, which may be styled the æra of unanimity. It affords a rallying point for the piety of the age, an unsuspicious medium of communication between the good of all parties and nations, a centre of union and cooperation in the advancement of a common cause, which cannot fail to allay the heats, and smooth the asperities of discordant sentiment. By giving the

most effectual aid to means already set on foot for the conversion of pagan nations, it also promises to accelerate the period when truth shall become victorious in the earth. When the pure light of revelation once shines amid the darkness of polytheism, we may venture to hope that the latter will be gradually expelled, that the contrast of truth and error, of sacred mysteries and preposterous fictions, they respectively display, will be deeply and extensively felt. What the Bible Society proposes, let it be remembered, is not to circulate such a number of copies of the New Testament in foreign parts as shall merely suffice to gratify the curiosity of the learned, to adorn a museum, or to enrich a library; but to lay them open, if possible, to all classes of society in every nation. What incalculable benefits may be expected to result from the completion of such a plan! Wherever the Scriptures are generally read, the standard of morals is raised, the public mind is expanded, a spirit of inquiry excited, and the sphere of intellectual vision inconceivably enlarged. While they contribute most essentially to the improvement of reason, by presenting to its contemplation the noblest objects, they aid its weakness, and supply its deficiencies, by information beyond its reach. If "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," be, as our Saviour assures us, "eternal life," to adopt effectual measures for imparting that knowledge, must be allowed to be the most genuine exercise of benevolence. It is to be lamented that protestant nations have been too long inattentive to this object: we rejoice to find that they are now convinced of their error; and that, touched with commiseration for the unhappy condition of mankind, they are anxious to impart those riches which may be shared without being diminished, and communicated without being lost to the possessor. Such is the felicity of religion,—such the unbounded liberality of its principles. Though we should be sorry to administer fuel to national vanity, we cannot conceal the satisfaction it gives us to reflect, that, while the fairest portion of the globe has fallen a prey to that guilty and restless ambi-

tion, which, by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, is permitted, for a time, to take peace from the earth, this favoured country is employed in spreading the triumphs of truth, multiplying the means of instruction, and opening sources of consolation to an afflicted world. In these eventful times, so pregnant with difficulty and danger, we consider this as affording a most favourable omen of the ultimate intentions of Providence respecting this nation.

Having briefly explained our object and motives, we beg leave to recommend the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society to the patronage of an enlightened public, not doubting they will feel the propriety of lending their support to an institution, which, besides the circulation of the Scriptures abroad, promises to provide for our domestic wants, by enabling the poorest person to possess himself of that invaluable treasure.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT

THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

April 13, 1812.

PERMIT me to say that I heartily concur in the sentiments so forcibly expressed by the respectable speakers who have preceded me. The more I reflect upon the constitution, operation, and genius of the Bible Society, the more is my conviction confirmed of its excellence and utility. It is matter of surprise to me, that an institution so admirable, and so beneficial, should meet with the least opposition from the professors of our common christianity, when the propriety of making the Scriptures as extensively known as possible might be supposed to pass among protestants for an incontrovertible maxim. To imagine such a measure can be carried into effect without being productive of much good, and still more to augur mischievous consequences as the probable result, approaches so near to an impeachment of the perfection and sufficiency of the divine oracles, that, to my poor judgment, it appears difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them. For my part, I am at an utter loss to conceive of a revelation from heaven *that must not be trusted alone;* of a rule of life and manners which, in the same breath, is declared to be perfect, and yet so obscure and incompetent that its tendency to mislead shall be greater than its tendency to conduct in the right path; of a fountain of truth (and the only original fountain, as our opponents themselves allow) more calculated, when

left to its silent operation, to send forth bitter waters than sweet. If these must appear to a candid and impartial mind untenable and contradictory propositions, then must the chief objections of our opponents fall to the ground, and their prognostics of danger, from the operations of the Bible Society, be pronounced chimerical and unfounded. Whoever weighs the arguments of our opponents must be convinced that they all turn upon the following supposition—that the Scriptures are so ambiguous and obscure that, when left to themselves, they are more likely to generate error than truth, to foment division than to produce unanimity and agreement. If this implies no reflection on the excellence of the Bible, and the wisdom of its Divine Author, what, I will ask, can imply such a reflection? And, if this be not admitted, how is it possible, for a moment, to entertain a scruple respecting the propriety of giving them the most extensive circulation?

To dread the indiscriminate perusal of the Scriptures, and, under pretence of tender consideration for the weakness of the common people, prohibit their circulation, has always been regarded as one of the most detestable features of popery. From the very dawn of the Reformation it has been stigmatized by protestants of every description, as constituting a principal branch of the mystery of iniquity. But wherein does the maxim of our opponents differ from that of the papists on this subject? If any difference can be perceived, it is certainly not in the *nature* but in the *extension* of the principle. The papists contend that the common people are not to be intrusted with the Bible *at all;* while our opponents assert that they are not to be trusted with it *alone.* The former instruct their votaries to shut their ears against the voice of God altogether; the latter insist that it is dangerous to hear it, except in immediate conjunction with their own interpretation. Surely this must be considered as strange language in a protestant country, and most offensive to protestant ears.

What is the reason that the Scriptures may not be trusted alone? 'Why,' say our opponents, 'they are

liable to be misinterpreted, and wrested to countenance the respective opinions and practices of different sects and parties.' Be it so: we admit this to be possible; but what remedy can be devised to obviate this evil? Is their use to be entirely proscribed? 'No,' say our opponents, 'but they must be invariably accompanied by another book, which may be considered in the light of an authorized commentary.' But we would ask, again, are we to judge of this commentary; or are we to receive it simply on the ground of authority, and upon the principle of implicit faith; or is any exercise of private judgement permitted to us? If it be replied that it is not, this is neither more nor less than barefaced popery. If the judgement is to be exerted at all, and every thing is not to be taken upon trust, their commentary must be judged of by some criterion, and what can that be but the Scriptures? The Scriptures must then, after all, be appealed to, before it is possible to determine on the correctness of the commentary; and thus we are led back to the precise point from which we set out, that is, the examination of the Scriptures. According to the views of our opponents, we are either to admit the principle of implicit faith to its utmost extent, which is open and avowed popery; or we are first to interpret the Scriptures by the commentary, and then judge of the commentary by the Scriptures. This is the circle, out of which it is impossible for our opponents to escape, and they may be lashed round it to all eternity! Let it once be admitted that the sacred volume is the only standard of truth, and the only infallible directory in practice, and it will necessarily follow that all other modes of instruction must be tried by it; and consequently, that every idea of giving it a corrective, or a companion, call it which you please, must be futile and absurd. I am persuaded I am speaking the sentiments, on this occasion, of every individual who composes this meeting, and not abetting the views of any particular party. I trust none in the present assembly will do me the injustice of supposing that any reflection is intended upon the liturgy: though a protes-

tant dissenter, I am by no means insensible to its merits. I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastised fervour of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions. The maxim we wish to establish, as amply sufficient to overrule the objections of our opponents, is simply that, which, in the hands of the immortal Chillingworth, was found capable of demolishing the whole fabric of popery. "The Bible," said he, "the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants."

The conduct of those who have distinguished themselves by their opposition to the Bible Society is also inconsistent in another point. While they deprecate the operations of the Bible Society, in circulating the Bible alone in this country, they applaud this very identical measure in its application to foreign parts. This appears to me a very extraordinary conduct. Their proceeding can only be justified on the admission that, notwithstanding the possible perversion of the scripture to ill purposes, it is calculated, when left to itself, to do good on the whole. In this instance, it is conceded that its use more than counterbalances the possible inconvenience arising from its abuse: a clear surplus of good is contemplated as the probable result, for, without such an expectation, how can the measure in question be entitled to commendation for a moment? I would ask, then, what principle of reasoning is that which will justify an opposition to the scheme of action which, it is admitted, is likely on the whole to do good, although it may possibly be accompanied with a portion of evil allowedly inferior. Are not all the calculations of prudence founded on a comparison of advantages and disadvantages? Have not all the plans of benevolence, which have ever been devised, proceeded on a necessary compromise with contingent evils, where, if it can be demonstrated that these bear no proportion to the good likely to result, every requisition is satisfied, and every reasonable suffrage secured? Are we to sit still, and attempt nothing for the improvement of our species, until we are

mathematically certain that nothing can possibly spring from our efforts but pure, unmingled, defecated good; and this in a world abounding with imperfections of all sorts, where evil is so widely diffused as to insinuate itself into every mode of action, and every element of enjoyment? If this is not pretended, why should it be deemed necessary for the operations of the Bible Society to furnish an exception; or that it should be perfectly free from that portion of inconvenience and evil which cleaves to all the works of men? When our enemies object to the distribution of the Scriptures alone in this country, and, at the same time, applaud the same measures with respect to foreign parts, they surely forget that the same objections apply, and with equal force, to the latter, as to the former proceeding. The obscurity of which they complain, which exposes them to the danger of being misinterpreted, their liability to be wrested to countenance error, heresy, and schism, are properties which, I presume, we shall not be very ready to ascribe to them. But, admitting them to possess these qualities, will they lose them by being conveyed to distant countries? Is their tendency to be pronounced pernicious or salutary, according to the degrees of latitude and longitude? Are there not a variety of sects and parties on the Continent, as well as in Great Britain, to whose views the perversion of them may be rendered subservient? Is the information they afford in this country doubtful and obscure; and does it become at once clear and decisive when it is communicated in foreign parts? As our opponents seem to suppose they possess a valetudinarian habit, and require a very delicate management in this country, perhaps they imagine their constitution may be improved by a sea-voyage and change of air!

Let it be carefully remembered, that the topics insisted upon by the objectors to the Bible Society, are precisely those on which the papists have been wont to insist in their controversy with protestants: the obscurity of the Scriptures, the danger of misinterpretation,

and the facility with which they may be wrested to the support of heresy and schism. It is surely little to the credit of our opponents, that they have no other weapons to attack us with, but what have been undeniably forged in the camp of the Philistines. It would, unquestionably, be an ill omen to this country, if pleas, drawn from the supposed insufficiency of scripture, should be again received, and become popular, which have been the principal means in former ages, of involving the world in the darkness of superstition and idolatry. The perversion of the Bible can proceed only from the corruption of its readers:—now, what is the remedy for this corruption, but the Scriptures themselves? Have they, who oppose our proceeding, discovered, in the plenitude of their wisdom, any better corrective of the ill propensities of the heart, the attachment to vice, the conceit of superior understanding, and the love of change, which are the prolific sources of error, than those lively oracles which God himself has declared are able to make us wise unto salvation? "The heavens and the earth," it is true, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." This effect, however, they must be understood to produce only in minds rightly disposed; for, in point of fact, they have been the innocent means of enticing millions to idolatry, while they never, as far as we know, reclaimed a single individual from that impiety. Hence the Psalmist, after celebrating these works of the Most High, directs our attention to a superior source of illumination, adding, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." St. Paul congratulates Timothy upon his having known, from a child, the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him, with faith in Christ, wise unto salvation. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." When I reflect on these passages, and others of the same import, I feel no difficulty in acceding to the

declaration of Lord Francis Osborne, that a child might answer the ablest of our opponents, provided that child were a christian.

It is asserted that we have no reason to expect the conversion of foreign nations, in consequence of the sole perusal of the sacred volume; and, in support of this opinion, our adversaries urge a passage in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans:—"How shall they call on him on whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" This inference appears to me to be founded upon an entire misconstruction of the passage: the apostle means to distinguish between the situation of those who are necessarily unacquainted with the character of the Saviour, and that of the persons to whom this information was conveyed; without intending to determine, or at least to lay any stress on, the precise mode of communication by which they obtained it. This is the more manifest from the extension of meaning in which the term *preach* is used by the same writer:—"For Moses," saith the same St. Paul, "hath in every city them that *preach* him, being *read* in the synagogue every sabbath-day." Such is the want of candour on the part of our adversaries, and such the unworthy artifices by which they pervert the language of scripture from the simplicity and majesty of its meaning.

It might be naturally concluded, from this species of objection to the Bible Society, that our opponents were distinguished by a more than ordinary portion of zeal for the propagation of christianity in foreign parts, by the aid of missionaries: I sincerely wish the result of an attention to facts were such as would justify this inference. The friends of the Bible Society, it is well known, are the warmest supporters of foreign missions; and the holy flame by which they are animated expands in all directions, stimulating them at once to the most active exertions in the distribution of the Scriptures at home, and for the support of the ministry of the gospel in pagan countries. When we compare, with their con-

duct, the coldness and indifference of our adversaries to this object, we are compelled to perceive that the invidious preference they give to one mode of doing good, is not so much to be ascribed to their peculiar attachment to it, as to a desire of depreciating and depressing the importance of another.

Permit me to close these observations (for the length of which I ought already to apologize to the respectable audience I am addressing) with briefly noticing some of the indirect, though important advantages, likely to result from the establishment and progress of the Bible Society. The direct benefit we contemplate, as the fruit of this institution, will undoubtedly be reaped by that innumerable multitude, among all nations, who, by means of it, will be furnished with an opportunity of perusing the sacred volume; but there are other collateral advantages, of the most important kind, which have already been experienced in part, and may be expected to accrue still more hereafter, from the admirable society of which this is an auxiliary branch. Among these, we cannot pass over its tendency to promote a good understanding among christians of different denominations. It pretends not, indeed, to cast any light on the questions which have unhappily divided the christian world; but as far as the objects of it are concerned, it consigns them to oblivion;—it presents a common ground of cooperation, and a centre of union without a sacrifice of principle, or the surrender of the smallest atom of the respective opinions and practices by which we are distinguished. Who, but the Author and Giver of all concord, could have put into the hearts of the children of men a design so beneficial and godlike, so adapted to allay the heats and animosities which have so often disturbed the peace of society, and disfigured our common christianity? It is like the "precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." It is, indeed, a most sacred perfume; and, while it is so abundantly poured out in the view of all nations, I cannot but imagine I see it ascending in clouds of incense

to heaven, grateful to God, to his saints, and to the holy angels, consecrating this happy soil, and drawing down upon it a copious shower of benedictions and blessings. How much unanimity strengthens, and discord enfeebles, the sinews of empire, is too obvious to need to be insisted on; nor was there ever a period in the history of Great Britain, when the former was more to be desired, or the latter more to be deprecated. The Bible Society is a solemn and public recognition, calculated, beyond any event that has yet transpired, to confound infidelity, and to expel from the nation the last relics of that detestable impiety, to shut up every crevice of the infernal pit, and disperse every atom of the pestilential stream. The sophistry of infidels had been successfully confuted by a succession of able writers; they have retired, baffled, from the field, their arrows spent, their ammunition exhausted; and nothing remained but to signalize the victory by a public monument, and to embody the national sentiment by erecting a public trophy out of the spoils of the enemy. This idea the Bible Society has nobly realized, by taking pledges from the statesmen, the senators, the nobles of the land, of their devoted attachment to the Word of God: they have publicly lifted up their voice, and declared, in the face of all Europe, that the Bible is the religion of Great Britain. What lustre does this shed upon our country: it appears the grand seminary of christian principle. Perhaps there is no single moment, night or day, in which some voice does not rise up to heaven in its behalf; and prayer is the grand key that unlocks the celestial treasury.

It is not too much to hope that the attachment to the gospel, avowed by those who have cooperated in the measures of this society, will be followed by an increased attention on their part to explore its contents, to imbibe its spirit, and to regulate their lives by its precepts; and that thus the interests of vital christianity, may keep pace with the more extensive promulgation of revealed truth. Let our activity in the cause be followed up by an increased spirit of attachment and investigation;

let us earnestly desire to taste that bread of life which it is the property of this society to communicate: then shall we be a happy, because a holy people, and this will throw around us a greater splendour than Roman or Grecian genius could bestow. Should the sentiments of that divine book take possession of the heart, and mould the character of the inhabitants of this country, it would secure to the nation a higher protection than all its military and naval preparations; and even the rocks with which our isle is girt, would, in comparison, be a feeble rampart against the assaults of our enemy. With perfect composure we leave the decision of this great controversy—and a greater never engaged the attention of mankind—to the arbitration of the Supreme Judge, without the smallest apprehension that we shall be called to an account, in that day when the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, for having unrolled too widely that volume which discloses to the eye of faith the realities and prospects of eternity. Nor will it be deemed presumption, if I affirm that, in a dying hour, when the interests and passions which now agitate us shall shrink to their due dimensions, it will afford us more satisfaction in the retrospect to have been the friends than the enemies of the Bible Society.

A SPEECH,

DELIVERED AT

THE GUILDHALL, LEICESTER,

On Tuesday, July 15, 1817,

AT THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

It has been usual, on these occasions, to eulogise the Bible Society; I will not say beyond its merits, for they are more than equal to the powers of the most exalted panegyric: but the frequency of these encomiums must be my apology for saying but little on that topic at present. The stores of rhetoric appear to me to be exhausted; while every department of nature and of art has been summoned and made to contribute its share to the illustration of the divine simplicity of its principle, the sanctity of its object, and the extent and grandeur of its operations. Never was there an institution, which at once went so far forward in the distribution of its benefits, and exerted such a reflex energy on its members and patrons; producing a generous enthusiasm, which kindles at every step, and is raised to a more intense degree by every fresh achievement.

I consider this society as a new moral power, which, combining the energies of Christendom in one great effort, promises to change the face of the universe; while, in imitation of Him in whose cause it is enlisted, it travels in the greatness of its strength, "mighty to save." It possesses every characteristic of the work of

God, in which the simplest means are made to produce the greatest effects; where there is the utmost economy in the contrivance, and the greatest splendour and magnificence in the design. The imbecility of man appears in the littleness of his ends, which he accomplishes, for the most part, by complicated and laborious operations. Omnipotence, on the contrary, places opulence in the end, and parsimony in the means. While our pride is mortified by perceiving how little we can effect by the greatest efforts, the Almighty touches a secret spring, known only to himself, and impresses a single motion, which propagates itself in circles continually extending, till it reaches the extremity of the universe, and diffuses order and happiness through regions most remote from its origin, and most unconscious of its cause.

Of so similar a character is the Bible Society, and so analogous to the movements of divine power, that, it appears to me, it would be impious not to acknowledge the agency of the Spirit in its first conception, as much as the superintendence of Providence in its support. To fix upon a course of action, which gives scope to every virtuous energy, while it stands perfectly aloof from the spirit of party, which draws towards itself the best propensities of our common nature, and unites the pious of every nation and profession in one harmonious family, is not the work of a mortal; it bespeaks the finger of God. Its direct benefits are too obvious to escape the most careless observation: but the indirect influence it exerts, in harmonizing the spirits, and conciliating the affections of such as had long been alienated from each other, is so remarkable, as to make it doubtful, whether its instruments or its objects,—whether those who share, or those who dispense its munificence, are the greatest gainers.

The utility of this admirable institution, however, has been called in question, its constitution censured, and its operations arraigned. To give the Bible to all classes and descriptions, without note or comment, is represented by some as a dangerous experiment, adapted to perplex and mislead uncultivated minds. Excellent as the Scrip-

tures are allowed to be, some preparation, it is asserted, is necessary, ere they are communicated in their full extent; and that the best use that can be immediately made of them, is to compose and distribute such selections and abridgments as seem best calculated for popular instruction.

That some portions of the sacred volume are of more universal interest than others; that the New Testament, for example, has a more immediate relation to our prospects and to our duties, than the Old, is freely conceded: just as one star differs from another star in glory, though they are all placed in the same firmament, and are the work of the same hand. But to this restrictive system, this jealous policy, which would exclude a part of the word of God from universal inspection and perusal, we feel insuperable objections; nor are we disposed to ascribe to any description of men whatever, that control over divine communications which such a measure implies. We are persuaded that no man possesses a right to curtail the gifts of God, or to deal out with a sparing hand what was intended for universal patrimony. If the manner in which revelation was imparted be such as makes it manifest that it was originally designed for the benefit of all, we are at a loss to conceive how any man can have a right, by his interference, to render it inaccessible.

The question, whether the Bible was designed to be communicated to mankind at large without distinction, or to a particular class, with a discretionary power of communicating it at such times and in such proportions as they might deem fit, can only be determined by itself. If it bear decisive indications of its being intended for private custody, if it be found to affirm, or even to insinuate, that it is not meant for universal circulation, we must submit to hold it at the discretion of its legitimate guardians, and to accept, with becoming gratitude, such portions as they are pleased to bestow. From the word of God there can be no appeal: it must decide its own character, and determine its own pretensions. Thus much we must be allowed to assume; that, if it was

originally given to mankind indiscriminately, no power upon earth is entitled to restrict it; because, on the supposition which we are now making, since every man's original right in it was equal, that right can be cancelled by no authority but that which bestowed it. If it was at first promulgated under the character of a universal standard of faith and practice, we are bound to recognize it in that character; and every attempt to alter it, to convert into private what was originally public property, or to make a monopoly of a universal grant, is an act of extreme presumption and impiety. It is to assume a superiority over revelation itself.

Let us see, then, how the matter stands. Let us ascend to its original, and examine in what shape it was first communicated.

Though we are accustomed to speak of the Bible as *one* book, it is, in truth, a collection of many, composed at different periods and by different writers, as holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost.

To speak first of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was distributed by the Jews into three parts: the Pentateuch; the earlier and later Prophets, including some historical compositions; and the Hagiographs, or Holy Writings, consisting chiefly of the Book of Job, the Proverbs, and the Psalms.

With respect to the Pentateuch, it is a matter of notoriety that it was delivered with the utmost publicity, and was neither more nor less than the public and municipal law of the Jewish commonwealth, which every king, on his ascending the throne, was commanded to copy with his own hand, as the perpetual rule of his government; and every head of a family, to teach and inculcate on his children, when he sat in his house, and when he walked by the way. It was first proclaimed from the top of Mount Sinai, with ineffable splendour, in the hearing of the whole nation, prefaced with the remarkable words, "Hear, O Israel." There is surely no pretence for representing it as a deposit committed to a particular class, when an accurate acquaintance with it

was requisite, in order to regulate the private, as well as public life, of every Israelite. Though, in process of time, its interpretation gave birth to a particular profession, whose followers are styled scribes in the New Testament, nothing was further from their thoughts than the assumption of a right to withhold it from public perusal: their employment was, partly, by an accurate transcription, to preserve the purity of the copies, and, partly, to elucidate its obscurities.

If we descend to the Prophets, we shall find them addressing their instructions, and announcing their predictions, in the most public manner, to all descriptions of persons — to princes, to nobles, to the populace, in crowded assemblies, in places of the most public resort. Such was the manner in which Jeremiah prophesied:— "I am full," saith he, "of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out on the children abroad, and upon the assembly of the young men together." (Jer. vi. 11.) When strong political reasons seemed to dictate a different proceeding, when he was violently importuned by his sovereign to conceal his predictions, lest he should weaken the hands of the people, and encourage their enemies, he remained inflexible, and continued to divulge the suggestions of inspiration with the same publicity as before. Yet, it is the prophetic part of scripture which is the most obscure, and most liable to be perverted to the purposes of popular delusion.

Of the Hagiographs little need be said. As they consist chiefly of maxims of civil prudence, sentiments of devotion, and sublime descriptions of the Deity and his works, it is probable none will contend for their restricted circulation.

Let us take a rapid glance at the New Testament. Here the Gospels will claim our first attention: and, with respect to these, if we are to credit the earliest ecclesiastical writers, they are a mere abstract of the preaching of the respective apostles and evangelists whose names they bear. We are informed that, when they were about to leave certain countries, where they

had been employed for a considerable time in disseminating the gospel, the inhabitants of those districts were anxious to possess a permanent record of the principal facts in which they had been instructed, that, by reading them at their leisure, they might, in the absence of their teachers, impress them on their memory. The Gospels of Mark and Luke are affirmed, by the earliest historians, to have been composed from the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul, and not to have been published until they had received the entire approbation of those apostles. This part of scripture, then, supplies no pretence or apology for the practice of restricted distribution.

The Epistles come next in order: and these, as is evident from their inscriptions, were addressed to whole assemblies of the faithful; in which, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Jew and Gentile, were incorporated on terms of religious equality. They were also read publicly, every Lord's-day; in the devotional exercises of which, the recitation of the Scriptures, after the manner of the ancient synagogue, occupied a conspicuous place. We find St. Paul strongly adjuring one of the societies to which he wrote, to take care that his epistle was read to "all the holy brethren."

There is one extraordinary book, of a character totally distinct from the rest, which closes the canon of inspiration. The book to which I refer, you are aware, is the Revelation of St. John;—a composition distinguished, above all others, by a profusion of obscure, figurative diction; delineating, by a sort of hieroglyphics, the principal revolutions destined to befall the christian church, from the earliest times till the consummation of all things. This portion of scripture is a fertile mine of erroneous, extravagant conjecture, and supplies, by its injudicious interpretation, more gratification to a heated imagination, to a taste for the marvellous and incredible, than the whole of the New Testament beside; insomuch, that few have been found capable of preserving a perfect sobriety and composure in the midst of its stupendous scenery, where the curtain rises and falls so often, where

new creations so rapidly succeed each other, accompanied by myriads of the angelic order, and the sound of trumpets, and of voices, and thunderings, and lightnings. Yet it is sufficiently remarkable, that this is the only book, to the perusal of which an express benediction is attached: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." Its integrity is also guarded and secured by a fearful measure denounced against such as shall presume to alter it in the minutest tittle, by adding to, or taking away from its words. The Holy Spirit, foreseeing what actually ensued, that the peculiar features of this prophecy would excite the prejudices of some, and in others its obscurity induce neglect, judged it necessary thus to employ a special precaution against its falling into contempt or oblivion.

Thus it appears, from a rapid induction of particulars, that the Bible is a common property, over which there is no human control; that, as "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," so it is all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work."

In addition to what has been said, it is also proper to remark, that translations of the sacred book were early made, for the benefit of the unlearned, in the vernacular language of the countries into which christianity had spread; that various versions in the Latin were published in the West, and the Syriac in the East, either during the lives of the apostles, or in the period immediately succeeding: nor was it ever made a question, during the first centuries, whether the inspired writings should be laid open to universal inspection. The christian fathers were well known to have inculcated their perusal on all sorts of men; nor are the most celebrated of them, St. Austin and St. Chrysostom, ever more eloquent than when engaged in unfolding their excellence, and expatiating on their utility, to persons of every description.

It was not till "the man of sin" had placed himself in the temple of God, and exalted himself "above all that

is called God, and that is worshipped," that a different policy prevailed, and the people were told that they must be content to derive their religious information only through the medium of priests.

Is it possible to conceive a greater insult? If we should resent the attempt to disturb an ancient possession, and to remove the landmarks which bound and ascertain the inheritance of our fathers, what ought we to feel when a scheme is set on foot to deprive us of the record of our salvation, of the charter of our immortality? Who are they who pretend a right to sit in judgement on the contents of revelation,—to determine what is proper to be communicated, and what withheld, as though they were sifting the chaff from the wheat? Is it come to this, that the medicine of life is to be dealt out with a sparing and cautious hand, and mixed with foreign ingredients, like arsenic or hemlock, which are only safe when administered in a diluted form, and in small quantities? What is it which has lifted these pretenders to such an envied superiority over their fellow-creatures, while the whole species, sick and infirm, are consigned to the skill of the same great Physician, and are either in a state of spiritual death, or under one and the same process of cure?

Apprehensive as I am of exhausting your patience, there are yet two considerations to which I would direct your attention, sufficient to demonstrate the importance of not relinquishing that right with which God and nature have invested you.

First, The great mass of mankind have no possible motives to tempt them to pervert the dictates of inspiration. The Bible is safest in the custody of those who have no temptation to abuse it, by forcing upon it a language foreign from its original intention. Such is the precise situation of the great body of the people. Their concern in religion is of the purest and most unsuspicious nature, since the only advantage which it is conceivable they can derive from it, is assistance towards holy living and dying. If it fail to put them in possession of a share in the common salvation, there is no

subordinate end to be answered, no private emolument attainable by its means, to compensate for their loss. If it be ineffectual to enlighten and to save them, there is no other benefit which they can flatter themselves with the hope of deriving from it. You, in this assembly who sustain no clerical character, possess this advantage, at least, over the ministers of religion, that you have no temptations to make a gain of godliness. Your religion either promotes your eternal welfare, or it is nothing to you. How far this is from being the case with the Romish hierarchy, through all its ranks and gradations, from his holiness to the meanest ecclesiastic, few of you need to be informed. The loftiest pretensions to universal empire, the prostration of Christendom at their feet, a plenary power of absolution, of opening the gates of purgatory and of paradise;—this gigantic dominion, extending to the living and the dead, founds itself entirely on a perverted interpretation of the Scriptures: and, were they laid open to the people in their true intent and meaning, the whole fabric would melt and disappear like a cloud. When we remember this, we cease to be surprised at the extreme animosity which his holiness has evinced to the free circulation of the Scriptures. Their circulation is the sure presage of his destruction; and the roar of his bull (if I may be allowed a pun on so serious a subject) is but the instinctive cry of a beast which feels itself goaded to madness by the operations of the Bible Society. To commit the custody of the the Bible to men who have so deep and vital an interest in its suppression, would be to commit the lamb to the care of the wolf. No, my countrymen! the situation of his holiness possesses nothing in common with ours; and our feelings accord to our situations. He calls for darkness, (and well he may,) to prevent the detection of his errors; we, for light, to conduct us in the pursuit of truth. He courts the shade, to conceal his enormities; we ask for illumination, to enable us to perform our duties. The book which we are employed in circulating, sufficiently solves the problem:—"He that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his

deeds should be reproved: he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." When the Romish church found she had deviated too far from the religion of the New Testament, to render a reconciliation practicable, she proceeded to take away the key of knowledge by opposing every possible obstacle to its progress; and, having availed herself of the ignorance of the age, and the apathy of the people, to establish her claim to infallibility, she became a standard to herself. Thus she rendered detection impossible; nor did she ever feel herself safe till the stage was completely darkened, till every chink and crevice was closed, through which a ray could penetrate. Thus was the reign of superstition established: but, were we to attempt a recital of a thousandth part of the fearful impieties she was guilty of, and the bloody tragedies she acted in the dark,—her impostures, oppressions, cruelties, and murders,—we should detain you till midnight, and leave the tale half told. Suffice it to observe, that this mystery of iniquity was founded on a prevailing ignorance of the Scriptures, and was completed by reducing them to a monopoly.

Secondly, the next remark to which I would request your attention is, that heresies have seldom or never taken their rise from the mass of the people. Look at the history, trace the origin, of the principal corruptions of christianity which have prevailed at different periods; and you will uniformly find, that they commenced in the higher classes, among men of leisure and speculation; that they were the product of perverted ingenuity and of unsanctified talent. Adapted to subserve the purposes of avarice and ambition, they were the invention of spiritual wickedness in high places. The commonalty, tenacious of the habits of thinking and acting to which they have been trained, are slow in adopting novelties, and the last to be misled by the illusions of hypothesis, or the false refinements of theory. The progress of opinion is from the higher to the lower orders; and it is as unnatural for it to begin at the bottom, as for water to ascend from the valleys to the hills.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is too much at war with common sense to have originated with the common people, any more than the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, the worship of the host, or the infallibility of the pope; all of which were gradually obtruded on the laity by the artifices of a designing priesthood, whose interest and ambition they promoted. Far from running into these absurdities of their own accord, the people, harassed, confounded, and dismayed, were hunted into the toils of men who made merchandize of souls. Let but the great body of the people be enlightened by the word of God, let them comprehend its truths, and imbibe its maxims, and they will form the firmest bulwarks against the encroachments of popery, as well as every other erroneous and delusive system. It is in a virtuous and enlightened population, and especially in a yeomanry and peasantry informed and actuated by the true spirit of religion, we look for the security and preservation of its best interests. It was among them that Christianity commenced its earliest triumphs; among them the reformation begun by Luther found its first and fastest friends: and, as it was in this department of society our holy religion first penetrated, should the time arise for its disappearance in other quarters, it is here that it will find its last and safe retreat.

An ingenious allusion was made, in your Report, to catholic emancipation—a subject on which the public mind is much divided. To agitate the question of the expediency of that measure, on the present occasion, would be highly improper; but I may be permitted to remark, that, however our sentiments may vary on the subject of emancipation, considered in a political light, we are unanimous in desiring to bestow that moral emancipation which is of infinitely greater value, and which will best ensure the wise improvement of the liberty catholics possess, as well as of the power they aspire to. We are most solicitous to emancipate them from that intolerable yoke of superstition and priestcraft, under which reason is crippled and made dwarfish, conscience is oppressed, and religion expires. We are per-

fectly convinced that nothing will so essentially contribute to raise our fellow-subjects in Ireland to their just, intellectual, and moral elevation, as the wide and unimpeded circulation of the sacred Scriptures.

Let us, then, proceed with unabated ardour in this glorious career. Let us endeavour to give as wide an extension as possible to the waters of life. Let them flow freely, in opposition to the narrow and mischievous policy which would confine them in artificial pools and reservoirs, where they become stagnant and putrid. Let us join our prayers with our efforts, that the word of God may have "free course and be glorified," whatever opposing force it may sweep away in its progress: and should his holiness the pope, while he is buffeting with the waves, and attempting to arrest the current, be thrown down, and his triple crown totter and tumble from his head; instead of feeling the smallest concern, let us rejoice and exult in the sure presage it will afford of the speedy arrival of that long-looked-for moment, when, at the decree of the Eternal, at the oath of the archangel, Babylon the Great shall sink like lead in the mighty waters.

FRAGMENT.

SPEECH

DELIVERED AT A MEETING OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY

[NOT PUBLISHED BEFORE.]

IF the Scriptures are in reality what they profess to be, we can be at no loss to perceive the obligation we are under to make them as extensively known as possible. On this subject we must allow them to speak for themselves; they assert their claim to be received as an immediate revelation from God, an inspired guide in the conduct of life, and in the pursuit of immortality, "a light shining in a dark place" to direct us in the paths of salvation. They affirm themselves to be the voice of God addressing his creatures on a subject of the last importance. Whether their claim to this character is valid or not, is a question to be discussed with infidels, not among christians, and is therefore to be put out of view in discussing the merits of this society. It is a christian institution, set on foot by professed christians in a christian land. It is strange that, among men professing christianity, a doubt should arise for a moment on the propriety of circulating as widely as possible the records of our common faith, the charter of the common salvation.

But we are not agreed among ourselves on various articles of belief, on the diverse modes of discipline and of worship. True; nor do we profess such agreement:

but that the Scriptures are the standard to which we must all appeal, that they contain the infallible rule of the faith and practice of christians, we are agreed; and what possible objection, then, can a diversity of opinions on other subjects create to the universal distribution of the oracles of God? Are your peculiar views, we would ask the objector, sanctioned, in your apprehension, by these oracles?—then, instead of acting an hostile part, we are your allies;—for we are circulating the very book on which your views are founded; we are diffusing that light, [and] that only, by which you profess to have been conducted to the conclusions at which you have arrived. What greater advantage could you wish for the propagation of your doctrines, than that mankind should have free and [universal] access to the sources of your own conviction? It must be assumed for granted, that, in consequence of faithfully consulting its dictates, you have been guided aright. Why anticipate, in regard to others, an opposite result? why suppose it will bewilder them in the paths of error and heresy, when your own experience attests it has led you into those of rectitude and truth? Is it agreeable to reason to expect that the same tree shall bring forth good fruit and evil fruit; or that the same fountain will send forth sweet water and bitter?

In the midst of that unhappy diversity of sentiment which divides professing christians, what can be conceived more unexceptionably proper than the circulation of that book, in the belief of whose inspiration we all concur, and may therefore act in perfect concert and harmony, without the smallest sacrifice of principle? If our professions are sincere, we are, in such a course of proceeding, at once promoting our respective views, our discriminating tenets, and exhibiting an edifying example of unanimity and concord, combining in one and the same effort the interests of charity and of truth.

We are aware that destructive errors may be, and have been, deduced from an erroneous interpretation of the Bible; there is nothing so absurd and extravagant, in the defence of which it has not been quoted; but, as

this is far from implying any reflection on that sacred book, so it has uniformly arisen from partial and defective views of its contents, where single passages have been violently torn from their connexion, and made to speak a language most remote from the scope and design of the writer. The proper antidote to this evil is [a] diligent and serious perusal of the whole; which will seldom fail, to all practical purposes, to ascertain that which is ambiguous, to elucidate what is obscure, and explain what is figurative and metaphorical. From a full conviction that a *comprehensive* view of the Scriptures is the most effectual corrective of the mistakes into which we may be betrayed by the cursory perusal of detached portions, it is the invariable plan of this society [to] distribute the whole of the Scriptures: nor can we sufficiently admire the inconsistency of those who, deprecating the danger of this, propose a partial distribution of the sacred volume, when it is obvious that the most alarming deviations from truth have arisen from this very cause, an exclusive attention to particular parts, without adverting to the relations they bear to the whole, and the reciprocal light which one portion of Revelation derives from the other. If "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," we are at a loss to conceive how any part can have an opposite tendency, or how the withholding a portion of the instruction it affords can be productive of more illumination than giving it in all its extent. "The foolishness of God is wiser than man," and the conduct of his providence in putting his revelation into our hands, without the smallest limitation or restriction, affords a presumption, or rather a proof, of its tendency to good, and good only; [while, of the contrary,] it is difficult to conceive the possibility without contradicting the decisions of infinite wisdom. If a part only would have been more beneficial than the whole, only a part would have been given; or if the benefit to be derived from the whole is restricted to some privileged class or order, without extending to mankind at large, we should

undoubtedly have been furnished with some intimation of this, some mark or criterion by which to distinguish those favoured individuals who are allowed access to the whole counsel of God. We certainly are at a loss to discern, in the adversaries of this institution, that transcendent piety, that lofty superiority to worldly passions, or that resplendent exhibition of the christian character, which might induce a suspicion of their being, in some peculiar manner, the confidential depositaries of the divine secrets. Whatever pretensions of this sort they may really possess, we can only lament that extreme modesty and reserve which has so effectually concealed [them] from the public view.

Gentlemen, on casting a survey over the different orders into which society is distributed, I am at an utter loss to fix on any description of persons who are likely to be injured by the most extensive perusal of the word of God. The poor, we may be certain, will sustain no injury from their attention to a book, which, while [it] inculcates, under the most awful sanctions, the practice of honesty, industry, frugality, subordination to lawful authority, contentment, and resignation to the allotments of Providence, elevates them to the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" a book, which at once secures the observance of the duties which attach to an inferior condition, and almost annihilates its evils, by opening their prospects into a state, where all the inequalities of fortune will vanish, and the obscurest and most neglected piety shall be crowned with eternal glory. "The poor man rejoices that he is exalted;" and, while he views himself as the member of Christ, and the heir of a blessed immortality, he can look with undissembled pity on the frivolous distinctions, the fruitless agitations, and the fugitive enjoyments of the most eminent and the most prosperous of those who have their portion in this world. The poor man will sustain no injury, by exchanging the vexations of envy for the quiet of a good conscience, and fruitless repinings for the consolations of religious hope. The less is his portion in this life, the more ardently will he

cherish and embrace the promise of a better, while the hope of that better exerts a reciprocal influence, in prompting him to discharge the duties, and reconciling him to the evils, which are inseparable from the present. The Bible is the treasure of the poor, the solace of the sick, and the support of the dying; and, while other books may amuse and instruct in a leisure hour, it is the peculiar triumph of that book to create light in the midst of darkness, to alleviate the sorrow which admits of no other alleviation, to direct a beam of hope to the heart which no [other] topic of consolation can reach; while guilt, despair, and death, vanish at the touch of its holy inspiration. There is something in the spirit and diction of the Bible which is found peculiarly adapted to arrest the attention of the plainest and most uncultivated minds. The simple structure of its sentences, combined with a lofty spirit of poetry,—its familiar allusions to the scenes of nature and the transactions of common life,—the delightful intermixture of narration with the doctrinal and preceptive parts,—and the profusion of miraculous facts, which convert it into a sort of enchanted ground,—its constant advertence to the Deity, whose perfections it renders almost visible and palpable,—unite in bestowing upon it an interest which attaches to no other performance, and which, after assiduous and repeated perusal, invests it with much of the charm of novelty: like the great orb of day, at which we are wont to gaze with unabated astonishment from infancy to old age. What other book besides the Bible could be heard in public assemblies from year to year, with an attention that never tires, and an interest that never cloys? With few exceptions, let a portion of the sacred volume be recited in a mixed multitude, and though it has been heard a thousand times, a universal stillness ensues, every eye is fixed, and every ear is awake and attentive. Select, if you can, any other composition, and let it be rendered equally familiar to the mind, and see whether it will produce this effect.

The importance of attaching a distinct sanction to the rules of moral conduct is immediately obvious; and

whatever eloquence may be employed in painting the beauty of virtue, and the odious deformity of vice, will have little influence in the moment of temptation, and in the conflicts of passion, upon the most cultivated minds, and on those of an inferior description, none at all. These topics appeal to feelings which are feeble and evanescent, while the passions to which they are opposed are violent and intense. Nothing short of a "Thus saith the Lord," accompanied and enforced with the prospect of eternal happiness or misery, will be sufficient to secure the practice of what is right, when vice and crime are recommended by the allurements of pleasure, or the promise of immediate advantage. But it is the word of God only to which the sanction of his authority is attached, and which incessantly reminds us, that the lessons which it teaches are not merely the dictates of reason, but the voice of God. In human instructions, however excellent, there must of necessity be a separation; the instruction is [in] one place the sanction in another: in the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures alone, they are combined and incorporated. Here, it is not a man addressing his exhortations to a fellow-creature; it is the Father of our spirits, the Judge of the universe, speaking from heaven, and grappling with the conscience of the moral and accountable being which he has formed. Let this persuasion be really and deeply felt, and the word of the Lord is "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." There is no room for evasion, no pretext for [inattention], and no possibility of escape, except [by] immediate compliance and submission.

ADDRESS

IN BEHALF OF THE

BAPTIST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

AT STEPNEY.

[WRITTEN IN 1811 OR 1812.]

IN calling the attention of the public to a new seminary, intended to be established near London, for the education of candidates for the christian ministry, we are desirous of presenting a short account of the motives by which we are actuated, and the objects we have in view.

We beg leave to premise, that nothing is farther from our intention than to interfere with the respectable seminaries already subsisting, from which the church of Christ has derived essential benefit. We congratulate the public on their institution, rejoice in their prosperity, and feel a cordial concurrence with the views of their generous patrons and supporters. We are persuaded, however, that the ground is not yet so fully occupied as to leave no room for a farther extension of the means of instruction to students in theology; and that, among the churches of the Baptist denomination, at least, a difficulty is frequently experienced in procuring young men possessed of those qualifications which the state of society renders desirable. Having been supplied by the noble munificence of a worthy individual, with a house and premises at Stepney, well fitted for an academy, we are desirous of realizing the liberal intentions of the

donor, by carrying into execution the plan of public utility he has meditated.

At this period, no apology can be necessary for attempting to assist young men, designed for the ministry in the acquisition of such branches of knowledge as may qualify them more completely for the successful discharge of that sacred function: since, whatever prejudices unfavourable to learning may have formerly prevailed in serious minds, they appear to have subsided, and christians in general admit the propriety of enlisting literature in the service of religion. From the recent multiplication of theological seminaries among protestant dissenters, such an inference may be fairly deduced. While we assert the absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures for every saving purpose, it is impossible to deny the usefulness of the knowledge derived from books, in unfolding many of its obscurities, explaining many of its allusions, and producing more fully to the view the inestimable treasure it contains. The primary truths of revelation, it is acknowledged, offer themselves at first view in the sacred volume; but there are latent riches and gems of inestimable value, which can be brought to light only by a deeper and more laborious research. There are numberless exquisite harmonies and retired beauties in the scheme of revelation, which are rarely discovered without the union of great industry with cultivated talent. A collection of writings, composed on various occasions, and at remote intervals of time, including detached portions of history the most ancient, and of poetry awfully sublime, but often obscure,—a book containing continual allusions to manners unknown in this part of the world, and to institutions which have long ceased to exist,—must demand all the aid that ingenuity and learning can bring towards its elucidation.

The light of revelation, it should be remembered, is not opposite to the light of reason; the former presupposes the latter; they are both emanations from the same source; and the discoveries of the Bible, however supernatural, are addressed to the understanding, the

only medium of information whether human or divine. Revealed religion is not a cloud which overshadows reason; it is a superior illumination designed to perfect its exercise, and supply its deficiencies. Since truth is always consistent with itself, it can never suffer from the most enlarged exertion of the intellectual powers, provided those powers be regulated by a spirit of dutiful submission to the oracles of God. The evidences of christianity challenge the most rigid examination; the more accurate and extensive the inquiry, the more convincing will they appear. Unexpected coincidences between inspired history, and the most undisputed remains of antiquity will present themselves, and striking analogies be perceived between the course of providence and the supreme economy of grace. The gradual developement of the plan of revelation, together with the dependence of its several parts on each other, and the perfect consistency of the whole, will employ and reward the deepest investigation. In proof of the assistance religion may derive from learning, rightly directed, we appeal to the writings of an Usher, a Newton, and a Bryant; to the ancient apologists of christianity, who, by means of it, unmasked the deformities of polytheism; to the reformers, whom it taught to remove the sacred volume from the dust and obscurity of cloisters, and exhibit it in the dialects of Europe; and to the victorious impugners of infidelity in modern times. Such are the spoils which sanctified learning has won from superstition and impiety, the common enemies of God and man. Nor must we forget to notice, among the most precious fruits of cultivated reason, *that* consciousness of its own deficiencies, and sense of its own weakness, which prompts it to bow to the authority of revelation, and depose its honours at the cross; since its incapacity to solve the most important questions, and to satisfy the most distressing doubts, will be felt with the truest conviction, and attested with the best grace, by such as have made the largest essay of its powers.

An unconverted ministry we look upon as the greatest calamity that can befall the church; nor would

we be supposed to insinuate, by the preceding observations, that education can ever be a proper substitute for native talent, much less for real piety; what we mean to assert is, that the union of all will much enlarge the capacity of doing good. Without descending to particulars, we must be allowed to remark, for example, that the art of arranging ideas in their proper order, and of investigating the nature of different sorts of evidence as well as an acquaintance with the fundamental rules of composition and rhetoric, are of essential service to a public speaker.

The existing state of society supplies additional reasons for extending the advantages of academical education. If former periods have given birth to more renowned scholars, none ever produced so many men of reading and reflection as the present; never was there a time when books were so multiplied, knowledge so diffused,—and when, consequently, the exercise of cultivated talents in all departments was in such demand. When the general level of mental improvements is so much raised, it becomes necessary for the teachers of religion to possess their full share of these advantages, if they would secure from neglect the exercise of a function, the most important to the interests of mankind. If, in the days of inspiration, there were schools of the prophets, and miraculous infusions of wisdom did not supersede human means of instruction, much less are they to be neglected in the present times, when no such communications are expected. To this we must add, that perverted literature is one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of the enemies of divine truth, who leave no effort untried to recommend their cause by the lustre of superior acquisitions, and to form in the public mind the dangerous association between irreligion and talents, weakness and piety.

In insisting so strongly on the advantages of a regular education, we mean no disrespect to those excellent persons who have exercised the ministry, much to the benefit of the church, without those advantages; many of whom are men of vigorous minds, who have

surmounted great obstacles in the pursuit of knowledge; and others, by their piety and good sense, well fitted for the stations which they occupy. We trust that such ministers will always be highly esteemed in our churches: there are situations, it is probable, which they are better qualified to fill than persons of a higher education. To the improvement of the higher classes, however, it will scarcely be denied, men of the latter character are best suited; and, as their salvation is not in itself less important than that of the lower orders, so their superior weight in society attaches to their character and conduct peculiar consideration. It is also manifest, from the examples of a Brainerd, an Elliot, and a Schwartz, that where piety in a candidate for the ministry is once secured, a course of academical studies is no impediment to the growth and developement of qualities the most conducive to success,—deep humility, eminent spirituality, unshaken perseverance, and patient self-denial.

With respect to the principles we wish to see prevail in our future seminary, it may be sufficient to observe, they are in general the principles of the reformation; and, were we to descend to a more minute specification, we should add, they are the principles which distinguish the body of christians denominated Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. While we feel a cordial esteem for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; disclaiming all pretensions to that vaunted liberality which masks an indifference to revealed truth, we feel no hesitation in declaring, that nothing would give us more concern than to see the seminary we have in contemplation become the organ of infidel or heretical pravity.

We conceive some advantages may accrue from fixing the proposed seminary in the vicinity of the metropolis. It may be hoped that its pecuniary resources will be benefited by being placed in the centre of commercial opulence; that a residence of a few years near the capital of a great empire may give an expansion to the youthful mind; and that the means which it affords of obtaining the assistance of teachers in various departments of

science, no where else to be found, may improve the taste, and direct the exertions of the students.

We conclude, with recommending our undertaking to the patronage of the public, and to the blessing of God, and with expressing our hope, that, through the influence of the Divine Spirit, in a copious effusion on the future patrons, tutors, and students of this seminary, however small in its beginning, it will become respectable for learning and piety, be a nursery of faithful and able ministers, and a blessing to the church of Christ.

PREFACE

TO

HALL'S HELP TO ZION'S TRAVELLERS.

[WRITTEN IN 1814.]

AN aversion to religious controversy may arise from one of two causes, in their nature the most opposite,—a contempt of religion itself, or a high degree of devotional feeling. They who consider the objects of religion as visionary and uncertain, or who, rejecting revelation, feel their inability to find a place where they may fix their footing, will naturally feel an emotion of contempt for theological contests, similar to that which we should experience towards men who were fighting for possessions in the air.

There are not a few who would engage with the utmost seriousness and ardour in a dispute on the nature and effects of paper currency, who would be ashamed of being suspected of directing their attention for a moment to the most weighty question in theology. Attentive to all the aspects and combinations of the material and of the political world, they are accustomed to regard religion as a sort of Utopia, a land of shadow and of fiction, where, wrapt in pleasing vision, credulity reposes on the lap of imposture. Persons of this sort are so completely overcome by the enchantments of the present state, so entirely devoted to the wisdom which St. James denominates earthly and sensual, that they are incapable of being impressed with a conviction of the possibility of a higher order of objects, or a more elevated and refined condition of being, than that with

which they are conversant; and, though they may possess a subtle and penetrating genius, they are not less disqualified for religious inquiries than an idiot or an infant. "They mind earthly things."

How far the indisposition to religious controversy, which prevails at present, may be justly ascribed to this Sadducean temper, I shall not pretend to determine. It is certain, however, that in some, this indisposition proceeds from a better cause. While the former class of persons think religion not worth disputing about, there are others who conceive it to be a subject too sacred for dispute. They wish to confine it to silent meditation, to sweeten solitude, to inspire devotion, to guide the practice, and purify the heart, and never to appear in public but in the character of the authentic interpreter of the will of heaven. They conceive it degraded when it is brought forward to combat on the arena. We are fully convinced that a disputatious humour is unfavourable to piety, and that controversies in religion have often been unnecessarily multiplied and extended; but how they can be dispensed with altogether we are at a loss to discover, until some other method is discovered of confuting error than sound and solid argument. As we no longer live in times (God be thanked!) when coercion can be employed, or when any individual, or any body of men, is invested with that authority which could silence disputes by an oracular decision, there appears no possibility of maintaining the the interests of truth, without having recourse to temperate and candid controversy. Perhaps the sober use of this weapon may not be without its advantages even at the present season. Prone as we are to extremes, may there not be some reason to apprehend, we have passed from that propensity to magnify every difference subsisting amongst christians to a neglect of just discrimination; to a habit of contemplating the christian system as one in which there is little or nothing that remains to be explored? Let us cultivate the most cordial esteem for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let us anxiously guard against that asperity and contempt which

have too often mingled with theological debates; but let us aim, at the same time, to acquire and retain the most accurate conceptions of religious truth. Every improvement in the knowledge of Christ, and the mysteries of his gospel, will abundantly compensate for the labour and attention necessary to its attainment.

However unhappily controversies have too often been conducted, the assistance they have afforded in the discovery of truth is not light or inconsiderable. Not to mention the Reformation, which was principally effected by controversy, how many truths have by this means been set in a clearer view! and, whilst the unhappy passions it has awakened have subsided, the light struck out in the collision has been retained and perpetuated.

As the physical powers are scarcely ever exerted to their utmost extent, but in the ardour of combat, so intellectual acumen has been displayed to the most advantage, and to the most effect, in the contests of argument. The mind of a controversialist, warmed and agitated, is turned to all quarters, and leaves none of its resources unemployed in the invention of arguments, tries every weapon, and explores the hidden recesses of a subject with an intense vigilance, and an ardour which it is next to impossible in a calmer state of mind to command. Disingenuous arts are often resorted to, personalities are mingled, and much irritative matter is introduced; but it is the business of the attentive observer to separate these from the question at issue, and to form an impartial judgement of the whole. In a word, it may be truly affirmed that the evils of controversy are transient, the good it produces is permanent.

These observations I beg leave to submit to the reader, as an apology for the republication of a treatise which is confessedly controversial. Coinciding with the venerable author in the general aim and drift of the following sheets, I am far from pledging myself to the approbation and support of every position contained in them; nor would I be understood to attach all the importance to some of the points of discussion, which they appear, in his estimation, to have possessed.

If there be any impression, in the following treatise which implies that the questions at issue betwixt the calvinists and arminians are of the nature of *fundamentals*, (of which, however, I am not aware,) I beg leave, as far as they are concerned, to express my explicit dissent; being fully satisfied that upon either system the foundations of human hope remain unshaken, and that there is nothing, in the contrariety of views entertained on these subjects, which ought to obstruct the most cordial affection and harmony among christians.

Having no pecuniary interest in this work, I may, perhaps, be allowed with more freedom to communicate my opinion of its merit. I am much mistaken if the candid reader will not perceive in the author an impartial love of truth, together with a degree of ingenuity and acuteness in its illustration and defence, not always to be met with in theological discussions.

The sentiments of my honoured father were decidedly calvinistic. His object, however, in the following treatise, was not so much to recommend that system in general, as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence and impairing its beauty. On reviewing his religious tenets during the latter years of his life, and impartially comparing them with the Scriptures, he was led to discard some opinions which he had formerly embraced, and which he afterwards came to consider as having a pernicious tendency.

From the moral impotence which the oracles of truth ascribe to man, in his fallen state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes, natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance, and under the former those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and

the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only to the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel,—those being the spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall.

These conclusions were evidently founded upon two assumptions: first, that the impotence which the Scriptures ascribe to the unregenerate is free from blame, so as to excuse them from all the duties to which it extends. In opposition to this, the author of the following treatise has proved, in a very satisfactory manner, that the inability under which the unconverted labour is altogether of a moral nature, consisting in the corruption of the will, or an aversion to things of a spiritual and divine nature that is in itself criminal; and that, so far from affording an excuse for what would otherwise be a duty, it stamps with its own character all its issues and productions.

In considering the moral character of an action, we are naturally led to inquire into its motives; and according as that is criminal, laudable, or indifferent, to characterize the action whence it proceeds. The motive, however, appears no otherwise entitled to commendation, than as it indicates the disposition of the agent; so that, in analyzing the elements of moral character, we can ascend no higher than to the consideration of the disposition, or the state of the will and of the affections, as constituting the essence of that portion of virtue or of vice which we respectively ascribe to it. To proceed farther will only involve us in a circle; since to whatever we might trace the disposition in question, should we be induced, for example, to ascribe it to the free exercise of the will, that exercise would fall under the same predicament, and be considered either as virtuous or vicious, according to the disposition whence it proceeds. When the Scriptures have placed the inability of mankind to yield holy and acceptable obedience, in

an evil disposition, or in blindness or hardness of heart, they have conducted us to the ultimate point on this subject, and have established the doctrine of human criminality upon a basis which cannot be shaken or disturbed, without confounding the first principles of moral discrimination. Though this is manifest, this impotence is entirely of a moral nature, totally distinct from the want of natural faculties. It is equally evident, that, to whatever extent it exists, while it actually subsists, it is as effectual an impediment to the performance of holy actions as any physical privation whatever: and on that account, and on that alone, may, without absurdity, be styled an *inability*. This important distinction was not wholly unknown to our earlier divines, though they neglected to avail themselves of it as fully as they ought; it is clearly stated by the great Mr. Howe, in his Blessedness of the Righteous, as well as adverted to by Mr. Baxter in several of his practical works. But the earliest regular treatise on this subject it has been my lot to meet with, was the production of Mr. Truman, an eminent nonconformist divine. In his Dissertation on Moral Impotence, as he styles it, he has anticipated the most important arguments of succeeding writers, and has evinced throughout a most masterly acquaintance with his subject. This work is mentioned in terms of high respect by Nelson, in his Life of Bishop Bull, who remarks that his thoughts were original, and that he had hit upon a method of defending calvinism, against the objections of Bull and others, peculiar to himself. His claim to perfect originality, however, was not so well founded as Nelson supposed. Since his time, the subject has been fully discussed by the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, and the distinction defended, with all the depth and precision peculiar to that amazing genius.

Another principle, assumed as a basis by the high calvinists, is, that the same things cannot be the duty of man and the gift of God; or, in other words, that what is matter of promise, can, on no occasion, be the matter of obligation. The Scriptures frequently affirm faith

and repentance to be the gift of God; hence it is concluded that they cannot be obligatory on the unregenerate,—a conclusion diametrically opposed to innumerable passages in the Old and New Testament, which insist, in the most peremptory style, on true conversion and a lively faith as the most essential duties, which other passages are equally express in exhibiting as matter of promise. "A new heart will I give them," says the Lord, by Ezekiel, "and a new spirit will I put within them, and I will take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh." The same prophet cries, "Make yourselves a new heart; for why will ye die, ye house of Israel?"—in exact accordance with the language of St. James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." The burthen of our Saviour's ministry, as well as that of his forerunner, was, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand;" while St. Peter, who perfectly knew the genius of christianity, affirms that Christ is "exalted to give repentance and the remission of sins." "Circumcise your hearts," said Moses, "and be no longer stiffnecked." The same Moses had been previously commissioned to declare, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart. and the heart of thy seed." Now the circumcision of the heart, we are taught by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, to regard as the distinguishing feature of the truly regenerate—of him "who is a Jew inwardly, whose praise is not of man, but of God." Whoever impartially weighs the import of these scriptures, must be convinced that the same things are, in fact, matter of command and the subject of promise, and must consequently be prepared to acquiesce in the decision of Infinite Wisdom on this subject, however much he may be at a loss to explain or account for it. The consistency of the promises, and of the commands in question, arises from the matter of each being of a moral nature. If we will allow ourselves to reflect, we shall perceive that the will, and the will only, is the proper object of command; and that an agent is no otherwise accountable, or susceptible of moral government, than as he is the subject of volun-

tary powers: we shall also perceive, that the disordered state of the will, or the radical indisposition of an agent to comply with legitimate commands, which is the same thing, by no means exempts him from their obligation, nor tends, in the least degree, to render the addressing such commands to him absurd or improper. That they will not be complied with, while that disordered state subsists, is true: but legitimate commands, enforced by proper sanctions, are amongst the strongest motives; that is, they tend, in their own nature, to incline the will, and therefore they cannot be withheld without virtually relinquishing the claim of authority and dominion. This may suffice to evince the propriety of issuing commands, notwithstanding the known and radical indisposition to comply; or, which comes to the same thing whatever be the *state of the will.*

With respect to the other side of the supposed contradiction, what can be plainer than that the will, as well as every other faculty of the mind, is under divine control, and that God can, with infinite ease, in what instances and in what manner he please, so change and modify it, as to induce a prompt and cheerful compliance with his requisition? What should prevent him, at whose disposal are the hearts of the mightiest of men, "to make his people willing in the day of his power?"

It is instructive, as well as amusing, to trace the coincidence which is often found betwixt systems which appear, at first view, at the utmost variance from each other. The grosser arminians and pelagians contend, that it is the duty of all men to repent and believe, because all possess an inherent power of so doing, without special and divine assistance. The high calvinists, on the contrary, deny that men, in a state of unregeneracy, are under an obligation to perform those duties, because they are not possessed of the requisite ability. Thus, both concur in making moral ability the measure of obligation; a position which, when the terms are accurately defined and cleared of their ambiguity, conducts us to this very extraordinary conclusion, that men are obliged to just as much of duty as they are inclined to.

On these and other points connected with them, the reader, if we are not mistaken, will find much solid instruction in the following treatise, accompanied with such a constant attention to the great end of theological discussion—the promotion of practical piety, as can scarcely fail of affording high satisfaction to serious minds. To this treatise, and to another on a similar subject, by my excellent and judicious friend, Mr. Fuller, the dissenters in general, and the baptists in particular, are under great obligation, for emancipating them from the fetters of prejudice, and giving free scope to the publication of the gospel. By these means a considerable revolution has been effected in the sentiments of the denomination to which I have the honour to belong: the excrescences of calvinism have been cut off;—the points of defence have been diminished in number, and better fortified;—truth has shone forth with brighter lustre;—and the ministry of the gospel has been rendered more simple, more practical, and more efficacious.

In reply to such as may object to the metaphysical subtlety which pervades some parts of the following treatise, I would avail myself of the distinction admirably illustrated by the author of the Light of Nature Pursued.* He observes, that although metaphysical reason rarely, if ever, conduces to the discovery of truth, it is of great advantage in the detection of sophistry; and that the mist and confusion in which moral subjects have been involved, by crude and undigested metaphysics, can only be exploded by the temperate use of that which is true and genuine: so that the chief praise of metaphysics is the cure of its own ills, the repair of the mischief which itself has wrought. The reader will observe that the author employs metaphysics, not to rear the fabric of truth, which can only be effected by a profound deference to inspiration, but to demolish a rotten superstructure which conceals its beauty. For the want of elegance or polish, discernible in the following sheets, it will be sufficient apology to inform the reader, that the

* Abraham Tucker.

author, destitute of the advantages of early education, had no other resources to depend upon, in his religious inquiries, than what were derived from the vigour of his understanding, and his unbiassed integrity of heart. Had he enjoyed the benefit of literary culture, he would have undoubtedly written in a style and manner more adapted to gain the attention of the superior classes: whether his reasoning would have been more cogent, or his method of handling his subject better fitted for the instruction of plain serious christians, for whose benefit he principally laboured, is more questionable.

Gratitude and veneration compel me to add, that with all the imperfections of the work, and the disadvantages under which the author of it laboured, I shall ever esteem it one of the greatest favours an indulgent Providence has bestowed upon me, to have possessed such a father, whom, in all the essential features of character, it will be my humble ambition to imitate, though conscious it must ever be

——"Haud passibus æquis."

ROBERT HALL.

PREFACE TO JANEWAY'S LIFE.

[WRITTEN IN 1816.]

At the request of a highly-esteemed friend, I feel no hesitation in recommending the remarkable narrative, now republished, to the serious attention of the reader. It exhibits a life eminently formed on the example of Christ, and a death-bed scene of extraordinary elevation and triumph. It is next to impossible to contemplate either, as they are exhibited in the following memorial, without feeling an increasing conviction of the reality and dignity of true religion. I am aware that some will object to the strain of devout ecstasy which characterizes the sentiments and language of Mr. Janeway in his dying moments; but I am persuaded they will meet with nothing, however ecstatic and elevated, but what corresponds to the dictates of scripture and the analogy of the faith. He who recollects that the Scriptures speak of a "peace which passeth all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory," will not be offended at the lively expressions of these contained in this narrative: he will be more disposed to lament the low state of his own religious feeling than to suspect the propriety of sentiments the most rational and scriptural, merely because they rise to a pitch that he has never reached. The sacred oracles afford no countenance to the supposition that devotional feelings are to be condemned as visionary and enthusiastic, merely on account of their intenseness and elevation: provided they be of a right kind, and spring from legitimate sources, they never teach us to suspect they can be carried too far. David

"danced before the Lord with all his might;" and when he was reproached for degrading himself in the eyes of the people by indulging these transports, he replied, If this be to be vile, "I will yet make myself more vile." That the objects which interest the heart in religion are infinitely more durable and important than all others, will not be disputed: and why should it be deemed irrational to be affected by them in a degree somewhat suitable to their value, especially in the near prospect of their full and perfect possession? Why should it be deemed strange or irrational for a dying saint, who has spent his life in the pursuit of immortal good, to feel an unspeakable ecstasy at finding he has just touched the goal, finished his course, and in a few moments is to be crowned with life everlasting? While he dwells on the inconceivably glorious prospect before him, and feels himself lost in wonder and gratitude, and almost oppressed with a sense of his unutterable obligations to the love of his Creator and Redeemer, nothing can be more natural and proper than his sentiments and conduct. While the Scriptures retain their rank as the only rule of faith and practice,—while there are those who feel the power of true religion,—such death-bed scenes as Mr. Janeway's will be contemplated with veneration and delight. It affords no inconsiderable confirmation of the truth of christianity, that the most celebrated sages of pagan antiquity, whose last moments have been exhibited with inimitable propriety and beauty, present nothing equal nor similar; nothing of that singular combination of humility and elevation, that self-renouncing greatness, in which the creature appears annihilated and God all in all. I am much mistaken if the serious reader will not find, in the closing scenes of Mr. Janeway's life, the most perfect form of christianity: he will find it not, as it is too often, clouded with doubts and oppressed with sorrows; he will behold it ascend the mount, transfigured, glorified, and encircled with the beams of celestial majesty.

Let me be permitted, however, to observe that the experience of Mr. Janeway, in his last moments, while

it developes the native tendency of christianity, is not to be considered as a standard to ordinary christians. He affords a great example of what is attainable in religion, and not of what is indispensably necessary to salvation. Thousands die in the Lord, who are not indulged with the privilege of dying in triumph. His extraordinary diligence in the whole of his christian career, his tenderness of conscience, his constant vigilance, his vehement hunger and thirst after righteousness, met with a signal reward, intended, probably, not more for his own personal advantage, than as a persuasive to others to walk in his steps. As he was incessantly solicitous to improve his graces, purify his principles, and "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," no wonder he was favoured with an abundant entrance into "the joy of his Lord." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

ROBERT HALL.

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE

TO A

VOLUME OF HYMNS,

Composed by the late Rev. B. Beddome, M. A.

[WRITTEN IN 1819.]

FAR be it from me to indulge the presumptuous idea of adding to the merited reputation of Mr. Beddome, by my feeble suffrage. But having had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with that eminent man, and cherishing a high esteem for his memory, I am induced to comply the more cheerfully with the wishes of the editor, by prefixing a few words to the present publication. Mr. Beddome was on many accounts an extraordinary person. His mind was cast in an original mould; his conceptions on every subject were eminently his own; and where the stamina of his thoughts were the same as other men's, (as must often be the case with the most original thinkers,) a peculiarity marked the mode of their exhibition. Favoured with the advantages of a learned education, he continued to the last to cultivate an acquaintance with the best writers of antiquity, to which he was much indebted for the chaste, terse, and nervous diction, which distinguished his compositions both in prose and verse. Though he spent the principal part of a long life in a village retirement, he was eminent for his colloquial powers, in which he displayed

the urbanity of the gentleman and the erudition of the scholar, combined with a more copious vein of attic salt than any person it has been my lot to know. As a preacher he was universally admired for the piety and unction of his sentiments, the felicity of his arrangement, and the purity, force, and simplicity of his language, all of which were recommended by a delivery perfectly natural and graceful. His printed discourses, taken from the manuscripts which he left behind him at his decease, are fair specimens of his usual performances in the pulpit. They are eminent for the qualities already mentioned; and their merits, which the modesty of the author concealed from himself, have been justly appreciated by the religious public. As a religious poet, his excellence has long been known and acknowledged in dissenting congregations, in consequence of several admirable compositions inserted in some popular compilations. The variety of the subjects treated of, the poetical beauty and elevation of some, the simple pathos of others, and the piety and justness of thought which pervade all the compositions in the succeeding volume, will, we trust, be deemed a valuable accession to the treasures of sacred poetry, equally adapted to the closet and to the sanctuary.—The man of taste will be gratified with the beautiful and original turns of thought which many of them exhibit; while the experimental christian will often perceive the most secret movements of his soul strikingly delineated, and sentiments portrayed which will find their echo in every heart. Considerable pains have been taken to arrange the hymns in such a manner as is best adapted to selection, from a persuasion, which we trust the event will justify, that they will be found the most proper supplement to Dr Watts that has yet appeared.

R. HALL.

A PREFACE

TO

ANTINOMIANISM UNMASKED,

BY THE REV. SAMUEL CHASE.

[WRITTEN IN 1819.]

IT is with considerable reluctance that I have complied with the request of the highly esteemed author of the following work, by prefixing a short preface; not from the slightest hesitation respecting the excellence of the work itself, but from an aversion to the seeming arrogance of pretending to recommend what might rest so securely on its own merits. The reader, if I am not greatly mistaken, will find in this treatise a train of close and cogent reasoning from the oracles of God, sufficient to overturn from its foundation the principles which compose the antinomian heresy; which he will be at no loss to perceive, are as much opposed to the *grace*, as to the authority, of the great Head of the church.

The fundamental tenet of the system to which this treatise is opposed, consists in the denial of the *obligation* of believers to obey the precepts of Christ, in supposing that their interest in the merits of the Redeemer releases them from all subjection to his authority; and, as it is acknowledged on all hands that he is the sole Lord of the christian dispensation, the immediate consequence is, that, as far as *they* are concerned, the moral government

of the Deity is annihilated—that they have ceased to be accountable creatures. But this involves the total subversion of religion: for what idea can we form of a religion in which all the obligations of piety and morality are done away; in which nothing is binding or imperative on the conscience? We may conceive of a religious code under all the possible gradations of laxness or severity---of its demanding more or less, or of its enforcing its injunctions by penalties more or less formidable;—but, to form a conception of a system deserving the name of religion, which prescribes no duties whatever, and is enforced by no sanctions, seems an impossibility. On this account it appears to me improper to speak of antinomianism as a *religious* error; religion, whether true or false, has nothing to do with it: it is rather to be considered as an attempt to substitute a system of subtle and specious impiety in the room of christianity. In their own estimation, its disciples are a privileged class, who dwell in a secluded region of unshaken security and lawless liberty, while the rest of the christian world are the vassals of legal bondage, toiling in darkness and in chains. Hence, whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Contempt or hatred of the most devout and enlightened christians, out of their own pale, seems one of the most essential elements of their being; nor were the ancient Pharisees ever more notorious for "trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others."

Of the force of legitimate argument they seem to have little or no perception, having contracted an inveterate and pernicious habit of shutting their eyes against the plainest and most pointed declarations of the word of God. The only attempt they make to support their miserable system, is to adduce a number of detached and insulated passages of scripture, forcibly torn from their context, and interpreted with more regard to their sound than to their meaning, as ascertained by the laws of sober criticism. Could they be prevailed upon to en-

gage in serious dispassionate controversy, some hope might be indulged of reclaiming them; their errors would admit of an easy confutation: but the misfortune is, they seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason, as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasions, than the light of evidence.

As far as they are concerned, my expectation of benefit from the following treatise is far from being sanguine. To others, however, who may be in danger of falling a prey to their seduction, it may prove an important preservative; to the young and inexperienced, it will hold out a faithful warning, by unmasking the deformity and revealing the danger of that pretended doctrine of grace which is employed to annul the obligation of obedience. They will learn from this treatise, that the authority of Christ, as Legislator, is perfectly compatible with his office as the Redeemer of his people; that the renewal of the soul in true holiness forms a principal part of the salvation he came to bestow; that the privileges of the evangelical dispensation are inseparably combined with its duties; and that every hope of eternal life is necessarily presumptuous and unfounded, which is not connected with "keeping the commandments of God." They will perceive the beautiful analogy subsisting between the mosaic and christian dispensation; and that the redemption wrought out upon the cross is just as subservient to the spiritual dominion of Christ over his people, as was the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt to the erection of the theocracy in the Holy Land: in a word, they will plainly see that the regal authority of Christ over his church belongs to the very essence of the evangelical economy, considered as an annunciation of the *kingdom* or *reign* of God.

To trace the process of antinomianism, and investigate the steps by which it has gradually attained its fearful ascendency, though an interesting inquiry, would lead me far beyond the limits of this preface. Suffice it to suggest a few circumstances which appear to me to

have contributed not a little to that result. When religious parties have been long formed, a certain technical phraseology, invented in order to designate, more exactly, the peculiarities of the respective systems, naturally grows up. What custom has sanctioned, in process of time becomes law; and the slightest deviation from the consecrated diction comes to be viewed with suspicion and alarm. Now the technical language appropriated to the expression of the calvinistic system in its nicer shades, however justifiable in itself, has, by its perpetual recurrence, narrowed the vocabulary of religion, and rendered obsolete many modes of expression which the sacred writers indulge without scruple. The latitude with which they express themselves on various subjects has been gradually relinquished; a scrupulous and systematic cast of diction has succeeded to the manly freedom and noble negligence they were accustomed to display; and many expressions, employed without hesitation in scripture, are rarely found, except in the direct form of quotation, in the mouth of a modern calvinist.

In addition to this, nothing is more usual than for the zealous abettors of a system, with the best intentions, to magnify the importance of its peculiar tenets by hyperbolical exaggerations, calculated to identify them with the fundamental articles of faith. Thus, the calvinistic doctrines have often been denominated, by divines of deservedly high reputation, *the doctrines of grace;* implying, not merely their truth, but that they constitute the very essence and marrow of the gospel. Hence persons of little reflection have been tempted to conclude that the zealous inculcation of these comprehends nearly the whole system of revealed truth, or as much of it, at least, as is of vital importance; and that no danger whatever can result from giving them the greatest possible prominence. But the transition from a partial exhibition of truth to the adoption of positive error is a most natural one: and he who commences with consigning certain important doctrines to oblivion, will generally end in perverting or denying them. The authority of the laws of Christ, his proper dominion over his people, and the

absolute necessity of evangelical obedience in order to eternal life, though perfectly consistent, in my apprehension, with calvinism, form no part of it, considered as a separate system. In the systematic mode of instruction they are consequently omitted, or so slightly and sparingly adverted to, that they are gradually lost sight of; and when they are presented to the attention, being supported by no habitual mental associations, they wear the features of a strange and exotic character. They are repelled with disgust and suspicion, not because they are perceived to be at variance with the dictates of inspiration, (their agreement with which may be immediately obvious,) but, simply, because they deviate from the trains of thought which the hearer is accustomed to pursue with complacency. It is purely an affair of taste; it is neither the opposition of reason, nor of conscience, which is concerned, but the mere operation of antipathy.

The paucity of practical instruction,—the practice of dwelling almost exclusively, in the exercise of the ministry, on doctrinal and experimental topics, with a sparing inculcation of the precepts of Christ and the duties of morality,—is abundantly sufficient, without the slightest admixture of error, to produce the effect of which we are speaking: nor is it to be doubted that even holy and exemplary men have by these means paved the way for antinomianism. When they have found it necessary to advert to points of morality, and to urge them on scriptural motives, the difference between these and their usual strain of instruction has produced a sort of mental revulsion. Conscious, meanwhile, that they have taught nothing but the pure and uncorrupted word of God,—have inculcated no doctrine but what appears to be sustained by the fair interpretation of the word,—they are astonished at perceiving the eager impetuosity with which a part of their hearers run into antinomian excesses: when a thorough investigation might convince them, that, though they have inculcated truth, it has not been altogether "as it is in Jesus;" that many awakening and alarming considerations familiar to the Scriptures have been neglected, much of their pungent and practical appeal to the conscience suppressed, and a profusion of cordials and stimulants administered, where cathartics were required.

In the New Testament, the absolute subserviency of doctrinal statements to the formation of the principles and habits of practical piety, is never lost sight of; we are continually reminded that obedience is the end of all knowledge, and of all religious impressions. But the tendency, it is to be feared, of much popular and orthodox instruction, is to bestow on the belief of certain doctrines, combined with strong religious emotion, the importance of an ultimate object, to the neglect of that great principle that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." While it is but candid to suppose that some are beguiled through the "good words and fair speeches" by which the apostles of antinomianism recommend themselves to the unlearned and unstable, it can scarcely be doubted that they are chiefly indebted for their success to the aversion which many feel to christianity as a *practical* system. Divest it of its precepts and its sanctions,—represent it as a mere charter of privileges,—a provision for investing a certain class with a title to eternal life, independent of every moral distinction, and it will be eagerly embraced: but it will not be the religion of the New Testament; it will not be the religion of him who closed his Sermon on the Mount by reminding his hearers that he who "heareth his sayings, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a man who built his house upon the sand, and the storm came, and the rains descended, and the winds blew, and beat on that house, and it fell, because it was founded upon the sand."

The most effectual antidote to the leaven of antinomianism will probably be found in the frequent and earnest inculcation of the practical precepts of the gospel; in an accurate delineation of the christian temper; in a specific and minute exposition of the personal, social, and relative duties, enforced at one time by the endearing, at another by the alarming, motives, which revelation abun-

dantly suggests. To overlook the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, under the pretence of advancing the interests of morality, is one extreme; to inculcate those doctrines, without habitually adverting to their purifying and transforming influence, is another, not less dangerous. If the former involves the folly of attempting to rear a structure without a foundation, the latter leaves it naked and useless.

A large infusion of practical instruction may be expected to operate as an alterative in the moral constitution. Without displacing a single article from the established creed,—without modifying or changing the minutest particle of speculative belief,—it will generate a habit of contemplating religion in its true character, as a system of moral government, as a wise and gracious provision for re-establishing the dominion of God in the heart of an apostate creature. Though there must unquestionably be a perfect agreement betwixt all revealed truths, because truth is ever consistent with itself, yet they are not all adapted to produce the same immediate impression. They contribute to the same ultimate object, "the perfecting the man of God," by opposite tendencies; and, while some are immediately adapted to inspire confidence and joy, others are fitted to produce vigilance and fear; like different species of diet, which may, in their turn, be equally conducive to health, though their action on the system be dissimilar. Hence it is of great importance, not merely that the doctrine that is taught be sound and scriptural, but that the proportion maintained amidst the various articles of religious instruction coincide, as far as possible, with the inspired model; that each doctrine occupy its proper place in the scale; that the whole counsel of God be unfolded, and no one part of revealed truth be presented with a frequency and prominence which shall cast the others into shade. The progress of antinomianism, if I am not greatly mistaken, may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the neglect of these precautions,—to an intemperate, and almost exclusive, inculcation of doctrinal points.

Even when the necessity of an exemplary conduct is

enforced upon christians, an attentive and intelligent hearer will frequently perceive a manifest difference between the motives by which it is urged, and those which are presented by the inspired writers. The latter are not afraid of reminding every description of professors, without exception, that "if they live after the flesh they shall die;" and that they will then only "be partakers of Christ if they hold fast the beginning of their confidence, and rejoicing of their hope, firm unto the end:" while too many content themselves with insisting on considerations, which, whatever weight they may possess on a devout and tender spirit, it is the first effect of sinful indulgence to impair. Of this nature is the menace of spiritual desertion, darkness, absence of religious consolation, and other spiritual evils, which will always be found to be less alarming, just in proportion to the degree of religious declension. To combat the moral distempers to which the professors of religion are liable, by such antidotes as these, is appealing to a certain refinement of feeling, which the disease has extinguished or diminished, instead of alarming them with the prospect of death. It was not by sentimental addresses, nor by an appeal to the delicacies and sensibilities of a soul diseased, that the apostles proposed to alarm the fears, or revive the vigilance, of disorderly walkers: they drew aside the veil of eternity; they presented the thought, in all its terrors, of the coming of Christ, "as a thief in the night." I would not be understood to insinuate, that the more refined topics of appeal may not occasionally be resorted to with great propriety; all I would be supposed to regret is, the exclusive employment of a class of considerations, of one order of motives, derived from religious sensibility to the neglect of those which are founded on eternal prospects and interests. As it is seldom safe for an accountable creature to lose sight of these in his most elevated moments; so least of all can they be dispensed with in the season of successful temptation. It is then especially, if I am not greatly mistaken, whatever may have been our past profession or attainments, that we need to,

be reminded of the awful certainty of future retribution to recall to our remembrance that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If, in the scheme of doctrine we have embraced, we suspect there is something incompatible with the use of such admonitions, we may be assured, either that the doctrine itself is false, or that our inference from it is erroneous, since no speculative tenets in religion can be so indubitably certain, as the universality of the moral government of God.

Before I close this preface, I must be permitted to add, that the prevailing practice of representing the promises of the gospel as *unconditional*, or, at least, of carefully avoiding the obvious phraseology which the contrary supposition would suggest, appears to me directly to pave the way to antinomianism. The idea of *meritorious* conditions is, indeed, utterly incompatible with the gospel, considered as a system of grace. But if there be no conditions of salvation whatever, how it is possible to confute the pretensions, or confound the confidence, of the most licentious professor, I am at an utter loss to discover. It will be in vain to allege the entire absence of internal holiness, together with all the fruits of the Spirit as defeating his hope of eternal life; since upon the supposition we are combating, the answer is ready, that the enjoyment of future felicity is suspended on no conditions. The absurdity of this notion is not less palpable than its presumption. All promises must either be made to individuals by name, or, indefinitely to persons of a specific character. A moment's attention will be sufficient to satisfy us that the promise of pardon in the New Testament is of the latter description; in no one instance is it addressed to the individual by name, but to the penitent, the believing, the obedient, or to some similar specification of character. Before any person, therefore, can justly appropriate the promise to himself he must ascertain his possession of that character; or, which is precisely the same thing, he must perceive that he comes within the prescribed condition. When it is affirmed that "except we repent we

shall perish," is it not manifest that he only is entitled to claim exemption from that doom who is conscious of the feelings of a penitent? For the same reason, if he only who believes shall be saved, our assurance of salvation, as far as it depends upon evidence, must be exactly proportioned to the certainty we feel of our actual believing. To abandon these principles is to involve ourselves in an inextricable labyrinth, to lie open to the grossest delusions, to build conclusions of infinite moment on phantoms light as air. He who flatters himself with the hope of salvation, without perceiving in himself a specific difference of character from "the world that lieth in wickedness," either founds his persuasion absolutely on nothing, or on an immediate revelation,—on a preternatural discovery of a matter of fact, on which the Scriptures are totally silent. This absurd notion of unconditional promises, by severing the assurance of salvation from all the fruits of the Spirit, from every trace and feature of a renovated nature, and a regenerate state, opens the widest possible door to licentiousness.

As far as it is sustained by the least shadow of reasoning, it may be traced to the practice of confounding the secret purposes of the Supreme Being with his revealed promises. That in the breast of the Deity an eternal purpose has been formed, respecting the salvation of a certain portion of the human race, is a doctrine which it appears to me is clearly revealed. But this secret purpose is so far from being incompatible with the necessary conditions of salvation, that they form a part of it; their existence is an inseparable link in the execution of the divine decree: for the same wisdom which has appointed the end has also infallibly determined the means by which it shall be accomplished; and as the personal direction of the decree remains a secret, until it is developed in the event, it cannot possibly, considered in itself lay a foundation for confidence. That a certain number of the human race are ordained to eternal life may be inferred from many passages of scripture; but, if any person infers from these general premises that he is of that number, he advances a pro-

position without the slightest colour of evidence. An assurance of salvation can, consequently, in no instance, be deduced from the doctrine of absolute decrees, until they manifest themselves in their actual effects; that is, in that renewal of the heart which the Bible affirms to be essential to future felicity.

But I am detaining the reader too long from the pleasure and advantage he may promise himself from the perusal of the following treatise, where he will meet with no illiberal insinuations, no personal invective,—the too frequent seasoning of controversy, and the ordinary gratification of vulgar minds,—but a series of calm and dispassionate reasonings out of the Scriptures. That they may produce all the beneficial results which the excellent author has so much at heart, is the fervent prayer of the writer of these lines.

ROBERT HALL.

Leicester, July 2, 1819.

A LETTER

TO

THE REV. W. BENNETT,

Author of an Essay on the Gospel Constitution.

January 18, 1810.

DEAR SIR,

I OUGHT sooner to have acknowledged to you the great pleasure I derived from the performance you were so kind as to give me at Northampton. I have read it with as much attention as I am able; and, though the subject is involved in so much difficulty, I admired the perspicuity with which it was treated, so as to be within the limits of an ordinary capacity. There is a precision and comprehension in the choice of terms, and a luminous track of thought pervading the whole, which, according to my apprehension, has scarcely been equalled and never exceeded, in the discussion of such points. I do think you have steered a happy medium, between the rigidity of calvinism and the laxness of arminianism, and have succeeded in the solution of the grand difficulty—the consistency between general offers and invitations, and the speciality of divine grace. This interesting question is handled with masterly ability. I am particularly delighted with your explicit statement, and vindication of the established connexion between the use of instituted means and the attainment of divine blessings, and the consequent hypothetical possibility of the salvation of all men, where the gospel comes. On this point, the representations of calvinists

have long appeared to me very defective; and that, fettered by their system, they have by no means gone so far in encouraging and urging sinners to the use of prayer, reading the Scriptures, self-examination, &c., as the Scriptures justify. They have contented themselves too much with enjoining and inculcating the duty of faith, which, however important and indispensable, is not, I apprehend, usually imparted till men have been earnestly led to seek and strive. Here the arminians, such of them as are evangelical, have had greatly the advantage of the calvinists in pleading with sinners. Your great principle of the design of religion, in every dispensation of it, being intended as the pursuit of the plan of divine government for exercising the moral powers and faculties of creatures, is grand and noble, and gives continuity and harmony to the whole scheme. I lent your book to Mr. B——, who is much pleased with it, and only wishes you had expressed yourself more fully in favour of the general extent of Christ's death. I think you have asserted it by implication, though I wish you had asserted it unequivocally, because I am fully persuaded it is a doctrine of scripture, and that it forms the only consistent basis of unlimited invitations. I think the most enlightened calvinists are too reserved on this head; and that their refusal to declare, with the concurrent testimony of scripture, that Christ died for all men, tends to confirm the prejudices of methodists, and others, against election and special grace. With this small exception, if it be an exception, your work appears to me to be entitled to the highest approbation and applause; and I cannot but hope it will have an important effect in bringing good men nearer together; than which I know nothing more desirable. Wishing you much success in every labour of your hands,

I remain, Dear Sir,
With high esteem,
Your affectionate brother,
ROBERT HALL.

AN EXTRACT

FROM

DR. JOHNSON'S PREFACE

TO

COWPER'S CORRESPONDENCE

"I ACCOUNT myself particularly fortunate, in being favoured with the opinion of confessedly one of the best judges of composition that this country has to boast—the Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester. In a letter addressed to me, on the 19th of August of the present year, 1823, he writes thus:—

'It is quite unnecessary to say that I perused the letters with great admiration and delight. I have always considered the letters of Mr. Cowper as the finest specimen of the epistolary style in our language; and these appear to me of a superior description to the former, possessing as much beauty with more piety and pathos. To an air of inimitable ease and carelessness they unite a high degree of correctness, such as could result only from the clearest intellect, combined with the most finished taste. I have scarcely found a single word which is capable of being exchanged for a better.

'Literary errors I can discern none. The selection of words, and the structure of the periods, are inimitable; they present as striking a contrast as can well be conceived to the turgid verbosity which passes at present for fine writing, and which bears a great resemblance to the degeneracy which marks the style of Ammianus Marcellinus, as compared to that of Cicero or of Livy. A

perpetual effort and struggle is made to supply the place of vigour, garish and dazzling colours are substituted for chaste ornament, and the hideous distortion of weakness for native strength. In my humble opinion, the study of Cowper's prose may, on this account, be as useful in forming the taste of young people as his poetry.

'That the letters will afford great delight to all persons of true taste, and that you will confer a most acceptable present on the reading world by publishing them, will not admit of a doubt.'"

THE

SPIRITUAL CONDITION AND PROSPECTS

OF

THE JEWS.

[WRITTEN IN 1826, FOR A PERIODICAL PUBLICATION.]

FEW perhaps are to be found who have made religion the object of their serious attention, who have not bestowed some thought on the spiritual condition and prospects of the Jews, a people on many accounts the most remarkable of any that have appeared on the stage of time. Intermingled with all nations, but uniting with none,—distinguished by their attachment to one portion of revelation, and their aversion to another,—equally removed from the errors of polytheism, and the belief of christianity, they occupy a station peculiar to themselves: "they dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the people." In this state of seclusion, it seems generally taken for granted that they are not only enduring the frown of Providence, but they are universally under the divine malediction, exposed to the doom of the impenitent and unbelieving. Their disbelief of the gospel is supposed without any exception, to render them liable to the penalties of eternal death. I have sometimes been tempted to doubt of this; and the design of my addressing you, on the present occasion, is briefly to state the grounds on which my doubts are founded, not with a

view to provoke controversy, but solely to elicit the inquiry of superior minds.

1. An essential difference exists between the Jews and other unbelievers, in a particular of great moment; which is, that they are already in the possession of the oracles of God, and, in these, of all that is absolutely necessary to salvation. That the Old Testament is sufficient to conduct men to eternal life is evident, from the testimony it bears of itself, as well as from the acknowledged scope and design of a revelation; for it would be a reflection on infinite wisdom to suppose it capable of communicating a revelation which necessarily failed in its principal object, that of "making men wise unto salvation." Nor is it less certain that some of the eminent saints and favourites of the Most High flourished under the Jewish dispensation. The doctrines taught by Moses and the prophets, it must be confessed, are in themselves an adequate instrument of sanctification, so that, if he who conscientiously avails himself of it falls short of eternal life, it must be ascribed to the intervention of a subsequent and more perfect revelation.

2. As a subsequent dispensation, however, has been given, enforced by the penalty of eternal death, it may be thought, this is sufficient at once to determine the future condition of those who reject it, and consequently to preclude the unconverted part of the Jews from all hope of salvation. It is agreed that the deliberate rejection of the gospel involves a sentence of condemnation: but that only can be said to be *rejected* which is adequately proposed. By the ancient Jews, christianity was rejected. Our Lord "came to his own, and his own received him not." They heard his discourses; they witnessed his miracles, or at least had the same evidence of them as they had of other matters of public notoriety; they beheld the spotless innocence of his life, and the perfect correspondence of the leading events of his history to the predictions of their prophets; nor was there any prejudice existing against christianity, but what was of recent growth, the pure effect of carnality, impenitence, and hardness of heart. They knew enough of the

christian religion to discern its sanctifying tendency, and to hate it on that account: their rejection of it betrayed an enmity to the true character of God, and therefore incurred all the guilt included in that solemn assertion of our Lord, "But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Their opposition to Christ was not the resistance made to the encroachments of a foreign dominion; it was domestic rebellion. The evidence of christianity was presented in all its force and splendour: it came into actual contact with the mind, and on that very account produced a feeling of hostility to its spirit and its claims, which would not have been felt towards an object more remote.

3. But the position in which christianity stands towards modern Jews is very different. Their knowledge of it must be derived almost entirely from the New Testament, and the causes which may in many instances, be supposed to divert their attention from it, are very dissimilar to those which originated the incredulity of their ancestors. The prohibition of the New Testament is a primary element in Jewish education. The absolute sufficiency of the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the impropriety of presuming to add to these lively oracles, and to abrogate an everlasting law, are among the first principles instilled into the infant mind. They are taught to repose with the utmost confidence on a religion which even christians confess to be of divine origin; while the system which has superseded it is comparatively of recent origin, and little accredited by its efficacy in correcting the vices and forming the manners of its followers. They are told, indeed, that christianity is the sequel and completion of the ancient religion,—that it substantiates its types and accomplishes its prophecies; but they are told so by those whom they have few inducements to regard. Respect for paternal authority, veneration for an illustrious ancestry, deference to age and rank, combine with the fear of innovation, and an attachment though too exclusive, to Moses and the prophets, to keep them ignorant of the New Testament, and consequently estranged from the principal means of

conviction. But the principles which we have alluded to are usually the strongest in the most virtuous and susceptible minds: nor is it difficult to conceive what an effectual bar they may prove to the perusal of the christian records, apart from those criminal prejudices which occasioned the rejection of christianity by their ancestors. The disbelief of christianity, on the part of such as have been trained on christian principles, can seldom, if ever, be imputed to ignorance—convictions must be stifled, and the force of evidence evaded; but the unbelief of modern Jews is the natural consequence of their want of acquaintance with an inspired record.

The portion of revelation which the Jew possesses already contains whatever is absolutely necessary to be known in order to obtain eternal life. Jews and christians, at variance about every thing else, unite their suffrages in its favour, affirming unanimously that it was for upwards of two thousand years the authentic revelation of the will of heaven. A Jew, therefore, cannot doubt of its competence to make him wise unto salvation. On the other hand, he is taught from a quarter which God and nature enjoin him to revere, to look upon the New Testament as an imposture. In this instance, it is but candid to suppose that the records of our religion are neglected, not always from the love of vice, or the predominance of worldly interests, but from a conscientious fear of innovation and dread of impiety. He is necessarily ignorant of a book which never engaged his attention; and that it failed to engage it is the effect of an exclusive, and in that respect only an erroneous, attachment to an inspiration of an earlier date.

4. Supposing him, from these and similar causes, to remain all his life unacquainted with the christian system, and consequently uninfluenced by its doctrines, have we any authority in asserting that he cannot possibly be the subject of divine grace, possessed as he is of an instrument of sanctification, which the Holy Ghost, for ages, condescended to employ? A new revelation can make no alteration in the intrinsic nature of that which precedes it; and, if the Old Testament ever was sufficient to make men wise unto salvation, why should we doubt of its being still competent for that purpose? Had it been the only companion of one that was shipwrecked on a desert island, shall we hesitate to believe that its serious perusal might be instrumental to his salvation? Here indeed the absence of other means of instruction would be the unavoidable consequence of providential arrangements, which cannot with equal propriety be affirmed in the case of our Jew. But, though his ignorance of the New Testament cannot be said to be the necessary consequence of the circumstances attending his birth and education, the obstacles which they may be supposed to present are very powerful, and not at all necessarily complicated with deep moral pravity. The utmost tenderness of conscience, the greatest solicitude for salvation, could not be supposed to prevent a youth strictly educated in the principles of judaism from contracting prejudices against christianity, the natural operation of which would be to indispose him to the perusal of its inspired records. The agency of the Spirit is of a moral, not a physical nature; nor is it his manner to interfere with the action of natural causes.

5. Admitting, however, that as much criminality attaches to the prejudice which keeps a conscientious Jew ignorant of the New Testament as the most zealous will contend for, it appears to be of the same order with that which operates in other instances, without our suspecting for a moment that it is incompatible with salvation. What shall we say of the prejudice which prompted such men as Pascal and Fenelon to reject the protestant doctrine, with which they were far better acquainted than a modern Jew can be supposed to be with the christian Scriptures? The opportunities which they enjoyed, for satisfying themselves of the truth of the reformed religion, were, at least, equal to those which a Jew possesses for becoming an enlightened convert to the christian faith; and the circumstances, whatever they were, that indisposed those illustrious men to the impartial examination of the lutheran or calvinistic

tenets, were neither more numerous nor more powerful than those which produce a similar indisposition in Jews to investigate the evidence of our holy religion. Nor ought it to be forgotten that it is impossible to continue in the papal communion without committing idolatry, a sin against which the most fearful maledictions of scripture are pointed. Notwithstanding this, however, all candid protestants acknowledge the possibility of salvation within the Romish pale.

With all their prejudices and imperfections, it is contended that they maintained a body of saving truth, which, under the agency of the divine Spirit, was, it is charitably hoped, rendered effectual to their sanctification. But this is precisely the mode of reasoning we adopt in relation to a pious Jew. He also possesses a system of saving truth. He possesses, in the law and the prophets, what our Lord himself has affirmed to contain sufficient motives to repentance, together with that expectation of a future Messiah, and of the spiritual benefits he is appointed to confer, by which saints under the ancient economy were justified. Let it be carefully kept in mind that it is the bare possibility that a Jew, without becoming a convert to christianity, may obtain salvation, for which we contend; or, in other words, that we are not warranted to conclude that the Holy Spirit, on no occasion whatever, deigns to employ the ancient oracles for saving purposes. Of the extreme danger to which the great majority both of Jews and papists are exposed, and of the strict propriety of speaking of them in the mass as in a state of alienation from God, we entertain no doubt; while we would indulge a hope, for similar reasons in both cases, that there will be found among both some with the "mark of God on their foreheads." The denunciations of divine vengeance on the patrons and supporters of the Roman hierarchy in the Apocalypse are as awful as words can express, and conceived in very general terms: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth," says John, "for ever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his

name;" yet, notwithstanding these fearful menaces, we venture a charitable opinion of many who have been entangled in the errors of papacy. We presume to hope that the merciful God will distinguish between the impious inventor of a system, and those who, without imbibing its spirit, have, in different degrees, been duped by its sophistry. And why should not a similar judgement be formed respecting a serious and conscientious Jew?

6. The question before us is, properly speaking, a question *de jure*, rather than, *de facto*: it does not so properly relate to the fact whether there are any Jews in a state of salvation, who are not converts to christianity, as to the possibility of the thing. We know so little of the real character of modern Jews, insulated as they are from general society that it is difficult to speak with any degree of positivity on that subject. A general and superficial view of that people would tempt us to form the most melancholy conclusion. But I have been informed by a learned Jew, extensively acquainted with his own nation, that there are to be found amongst them men of a very different stamp from what is generally prevalent. He solemnly assured me that he knew one Jew in particular, a foreigner, who was accustomed to spend the night preceding their great fast, in the synagogue, prostrate in tears and supplications; and, on my asking what he was praying for, he replied, with some quickness, "For the pardon of his sins, and the sins of his people, and for the speedy arrival of the promised Messiah:" he declared, at the same time, that this was not a solitary instance. Admitting this representation to be correct, (and there is nothing in it which exceeds the bounds of credibility,) I should feel little hesitation in believing that "He who delighteth in mercy" would not despise the prayer of such a penitent, because he wanted that explicit knowledge of Christ which was for ages withheld from the Jewish church. Prevented from attending to the evidences of christianity, by the influence of prejudices which it was extremely difficult for him to surmount, and, at all events, not

more criminal than those which kept Fenelon within the trammels of popery, what should induce us to form such an opposite judgement, in two cases, as to place the latter in the list of eminent saints, while we consign the former to destruction? Dark as popery is, we must allow that the respective degrees of illumination enjoyed in the two cases were very unequal, but the fainter of the two we must either confess is in itself saving, or give up the patriarchs and prophets for lost.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to remind your readers, that while I plead for the possibility of a Jew's obtaining salvation without that clear and explicit knowledge of Christ which christians possess, I am far from supposing two distinct methods of salvation: whoever are justified, whether under the Jewish or christian economies, are alike justified by faith in the Messiah. But I am at a loss to perceive why that more vague and imperfect knowledge of his character supplied by Moses and the prophets, which formerly availed for that purpose, should necessarily be ineffectual now.

7. These views are, in my humble opinion, considerably confirmed by the tenour of the prophetic writings, which seem on various occasions to recognize a relation as all along subsisting between the Supreme Being and the Jews, previously to the period of their accession to the christian church. It appears to me evident, from ancient prophecy, that the scene of the future conversion of the Jews is their own land, where, it is probable, from Zechariah, that a supernatural interposition of the Messiah will take place in their favour, that he will suddenly reveal himself to them as a nation, and thus effect the accomplishment of the remarkable prediction recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of that prophecy. Before their final deliverance, however, we read of a severe purgation which they are destined to undergo, during which two parts shall be cut off, and a third only left, and that the third part is to be brought through the fire, and to be refined as silver is refined, and to be tried as gold is tried. "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my

people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel, where predicting, as I conceive, the final restoration of the Jews to their own land, tells us that previously to that event, the Lord "will plead with them in the wilderness of the people, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt; that he will bring them into the bond of the covenant, purge out from them the rebels and those that transgress, so that they shall not enter into the land of Israel:" and he adds, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord."

The latter chapters of Ezekiel, describing the erection of a certain temple, are involved in so much obscurity, that it seems difficult to arrive at any determinate conclusion respecting the import of that mysterious prophecy. It is certain that the attempt to spiritualize it produces little besides perplexity and confusion; nor have we any example in scripture of an allegory so perfectly dark and enigmatic as it must be confessed to be on that supposition. The third chapter of Hosea seems to present us with a just and striking picture of the present condition of the Jews; they have remained "many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without a teraphim." Separated alike from christians and from heathens, they still retain their conjugal relation to the Lord; they are under his frown, but not severed from his covenant, and occupy a peculiar and intermediate station between the members of the christian church and the worshippers of idols.

The preceding remarks, let it be remembered, are designed to apply not to the great mass of the Jewish people, who appear to be in a state of deep alienation from God, but solely to such among them (if such there be) as are conscientious disciples of Moses and the prophets, and who, though they are destitute of the superior illumination of the gospel, faithfully improve the light which they enjoy.

The chief practical use to be derived from the hypothesis which I have ventured to suggest, is to inspire us

with an increased tenderness and respect for the seed of Abraham, as containing, notwithstanding its occupying a distinct fold, a portion of the true church of God. If we can be induced to hope that he has still a people among them, we shall be ready to look upon them with something like fraternal affection, and to embrace every opportunity of reprobating and removing the cruel priva tions and restrictions imposed by christian nations, who, absurdly imagining that they do an acceptable service to God by their persecution and depression, are in reality treasuring up wrath by aggravating the affliction of those whom he has smitten. It is surprising that any man can read the ancient prophecies with attention, without perceiving that he surveys the treatment of his ancient people with a jealous eye; and that, while he signalizes his displeasure against them by the course of his providence, he will enter into a severe reckoning with those who shall be found "to help on the affliction." A large arrear of guilt has been contracted by the nations of christendom on this account; and in this age of liberality, when such mighty efforts are made to procure the removal of political disabilities on the score of religion, it is surely high time their attention was turned to the relief of the oppressed and persecuted children of Abraham. Their political emancipation, and restoration to the equal rights of citizenship, might be reasonably expected to soften their prejudices, and dispose them to a more favourable hearing of the christian cause; nor could any thing be more becoming the character and pretensions of the Jewish Society, than to take the lead in that noble enterprise. As the basis of all social virtue is laid in justice, so by none should its obligations be deemed more sacred than by those who make loud professions of christian zeal and exalted charity.

Having thus freely stated my present opinions upon a subject which I think has not often been discussed, simply with a view to excite inquiry, I have no intention to enter into controversy by defending them, but shall cheerfully leave them to the consideration of your readers.

THE

SUBSTANCE OF A CHARGE,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. J. K. HALL, AT KETTERING, NOV. 8, 1815.

[*From the Notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford.*]

I SHALL not select any particular passage of scripture, as it is not my intention to confine myself to any one subject, but to communicate such miscellaneous hints of advice as may be suitable to the present occasion.

If, however, I refer to one passage more than another, it will be the exhortation of Paul to Timothy:—"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

The solemn transactions of this day will not be done with when the service is closed; they will undergo a review at the tribunal of the great Judge, in whose name we are now assembled. Nothing in this state is final: every thing in time is connected with eternity. The church of Christ here, who have chosen you for their pastor, and you, my brother, who have accepted this office, will have your determinations, your motives, and your ends adjudged by "Him who seeth not as man seeth," and will meet with a reward according to their sincerity and purity.

You now stand as a watchman, situated on an eminence; if you see danger you must "blow the trumpet," and warn the people, that "he that taketh warning may

deliver his soul;" and "if any man take not warning, his blood shall be upon his own head;" if the people be not warned, they may be taken away in their iniquity; but "their blood," saith the Lord, "will I require at the watchman's hands."

You are a steward of the manifold mysteries of God, to bring out of the treasury "things new and old, that every one may have a portion." "Moreover, it is required of a steward that he be found faithful."

The principal duty of this office consists in your engagement to preach the gospel:—"Preach the word."

You will recollect that your work is not to dispense the principles inculcated by any human authority, or supported by any human society. Though the treasure of the gospel be communicated to "earthen vessels," its origin is celestial.

There is, then, little scope for the exercise of invention, or the flights of imagination, in the discharge of this duty: these faculties are employed to find out new principles, or to discover new associations; but their exercise here will only tend to mix truth with error, to "darken counsel by words without knowledge," and to impair that system of truth which God hath furnished, and communicated to man. You are not required to make new discoveries; you need only to inquire and ascertain what is revealed in the word of God; find out what is "the mind of the Spirit," and submit yourself to his instructions. The best method of doing this, in connexion with reading and meditation, is to pray for spiritual illumination, like David, when he said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law." There are many wonderful things in the law; but we need the Spirit to give us *understanding*, and still more to cause us to feel the influence of truth in our own hearts, and to communicate it to the hearts of others.

There are three things to which you must attend in preaching; the matter, the mode, and the motives: the matter must be pure, the mode "with all gravity," the motives such as are presented in the word of God, and

furnished by your office and your particular station in the church.

In preaching the word, incorruptness, or purity in your matter, is of the first importance: in order to this, adhere to the dictates of the holy Scriptures. I mean not, by this, that you should confine yourself to the words, but to the sentiments: the sentiments may be lost where the words are retained; but the sentiments may be retained and communicated in different expressions.

Preach the word purely and fully; mix nothing with it that does not belong to it, or may not evidently be inferred from its language.

State every doctrine and opinion as near to the mind of the Spirit as you can ascertain, by the most cautious inquiry.

The doctrines of the word you will bring forth in their full import, without concealing them, or endeavouring to melt them down and mould them so as to suit the prejudiced and indolent depravity of the human heart.

The gospel is not suited, nor can it be made to suit, the corrupt dispositions and inclinations of the "carnal mind;" but the faithful preaching of it is calculated to oppose and to overcome those evil prejudices so far as to excite men to attend to the doctrines it contains, and the blessings it proposes. It is your duty, not to bring down the gospel into a conformity with them, but to change them into a conformity with the gospel.

Read the Scriptures frequently, with close attention and fervent prayer. Endeavour to collect as much knowledge relative to revealed truth as you can possibly acquire. Out of the Scriptures you may continually draw new treasures; and if you are "a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom," you will not find it difficult to present a variety of interesting matter from hence, that shall not only be profitable, but delightful to your hearers.

There are two opposite extremes to be avoided in *the manner* of your preaching the word: the one, a manner

vague and indistinct; the other, a manner too narrow, subtle, and systematical.

Some have preached the gospel rather by implication than by plain direct statements: they have treated it as if there were something in its doctrines that would not bear the exhibition. Such men have made moral instructions the main points of their ministry: the doctrines of the atonement, regeneration, the divinity of the Saviour, and the riches of his grace, if they have not been entirely suppressed, have not occupied that prominent situation which their importance demands for them: and their hearers have consequently been altogether unacquainted with them, or, having but slight hold of them, these things have gradually slidden out of their minds, and left them prepared for heretical instructors. Be not, then, ashamed of the gospel; though it may contradict many of the fashionable and favourite notions of mankind, and though you may find mysteries connected with the subjects of it which you cannot comprehend; yet, as we know but little of the world, and of ourselves less, we must receive with simplicity what God has taught. He *must* "be true, though every man be a liar."—You have taken upon you the solemn charge of "feeding the flock of God," you must keep back no part of what he has provided for them; let it be your concern, that at the end of your ministry you may be able to speak as St. Paul:—"I kept back nothing that was profitable to you: I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Opposed to the vague and indistinct manner of preaching, is the narrow and systematical method, according to which, doctrines, sometimes not the most important, have been made the themes of remark and discussion, to the neglect of every other subject.

The gospel is not revealed in a systematic form; it is not confined to any particular set of doctrines; nor does it ever advance *any* doctrine as *merely* a subject of speculation.

Be upon your guard against confining your administrations; point out the practical consequences of the doctrines you preach, without which they will not produce that good which they are calculated to yield as they are revealed in the Scriptures. It is of great importance to observe the proportion which truths bear to each other, that we may not dwell upon subjects of comparatively small moment, to the neglect of others that are really weighty. We should not give too much of our attention to any favourite topics, however important; the effect of such a course will be to leave a wrong impression on the minds of the hearers. It will be likely to produce a disproportionate regard to some doctrines, ordinances, and moral duties; which is a similar deformity in the new man to the disproportionate enlargement of any particular member in the human body; and it may be, that such regard to any doctrine, out of its connexion with other revealed truths, will only serve to exhibit it as a subject of speculation, and not of vital and practical utility.

An excellent man was so impressed with the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, that he made it the constant topic of his ministry; every sermon he preached was crowded with proofs, or answers to objections relating to this important topic; and the result was, that most of his hearers became arians and socinians! This effect was not such as he anticipated, or as might be thought of at the time by others; but the consequence was natural. Such discussions produced, first, a dry speculative attention to the subject, then a fiery and contentious spirit in discussion; in this state the spirit of the doctrine was lost, and the people sunk into such a frame of mind as is suited to the reception of these or any other heresies that might be sophistically presented to them. A serious, spiritual state of mind is that which you must be concerned to promote in your hearers, as the best preservative against error: and, in order to this, you must proclaim both the doctrinal truth, and the practical exhortations of religion.

There has been long laid down a rule, which is often repeated, and is most excellent, and worthy of constant

recollection: it is, that we must "preach the doctrines practically, and preach practice doctrinally." Preach the doctrines so as to show their influence on our practice, and recommend religious and virtuous conduct by evangelical motives. This happy combination will form a complete course of religious instruction. It is impossible to say which of these two, doctrinal or practical preaching, is most necessary; or which extreme is most dangerous—to preach doctrine without practice, or practice without doctrine. Read, then, the Scriptures of the New Testament, in order to observe how these are blended together by our Lord and his inspired apostles. You will observe *there*, that the enforcement of duties, by evangelical motives, is the very end of the gospel: and all preaching is good and estimable, only as it secures the same end by the same motives.

Be not afraid of devoting whole sermons to particular parts of moral conduct and religious duties. It is impossible to give right views of them, unless you dissect characters, and describe particular virtues and vices. The "fruits of the flesh," and the "fruits of the Spirit," must be distinctly pointed out. To preach against sin in general, without descending to particulars, may lead many to complain of the evil of their hearts, at the same time that they are awfully inattentive to the evil of their conduct.

You are aware, that to inculcate the necessity of regeneration is a large part of your work, and must not, on any account, be neglected; but it must not be so taught as to lead men to suppose that if they are once regenerated, they may be careless and indifferent, for then they are sure of heaven. If you do not often address them with the utmost importunity, to guard them against sin, and to animate them to holiness, you will be chargeable with neglect. You must warn the righteous man that he turn not from his righteousness, as well as assure the wicked man that he will perish if he persevere in his wickedness. If serious admonitions are neglected, the preaching of regeneration itself may be hurtful, by leading numbers to suppose, that, having

passed the ordeal, nothing now remains but for them to wait their entrance into heaven, for which they will think they are already prepared. There is, we deeply lament, a sort of evangelical ministry which produces no effect but to awaken to a sudden apprehension of danger, and then to consign, by means of opiates, to the delusive and destructive stupidity of spiritual death.

When no pains are taken to warn the awakened of the necessity of deep repentance, of living faith, of persevering obedience, of unceasing vigilance, and of renewed conflicts, even unto the end, they are in danger of fancying they are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," though they are "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Remind them that, when they enter on a christian profession, they only put on the armour: admonish them of the obligations they are under to be holy and active. They have entered as soldiers of the cross, they have taken the military oath; but merely to take that, is not to perform the duty of a soldier. The display of bravery is to be made in the day of conflict, in their watching, standing, striving, and putting to flight the enemies of their salvation.

Exhort them, therefore, incessantly, that they "walk worthy of their high calling;" that they walk "as becometh the gospel of Christ;" that they "draw not back unto perdition;" that they be faithful unto death, that they may obtain "the crown of life."

I will now proceed to notice briefly those parts of your work which are not immediately connected with preaching the word; "Be instant in season, out of season," said the apostle. While engaged in ministering the word, you are instant in season; but you should also attend to your duties out of season, when it is not a time for preaching.

Remember, *this* people is *your charge*. When they are absent from you, bear them in your mind: let them have an interest in your prayers when you have retired to your closet: though they are your charge you cannot be always speaking to them; but they must be engraved

on your heart, as the high priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel. The good shepherd is acquainted with all his sheep.

The excellent Booth has said, "He that does not pray oftener for his people than with them, neglects an important part of his duty." It will endear them to you, and draw out your affections to them, if you pray much for them, and it will secure, through the divine blessing, your usefulness amongst them. You are, as an intercessor, to "stand in the breach;" and, whatever difficulty or danger may oppose, you must be, like another Moses, between God and the people.

Not only is secret prayer for them a great duty; but an habitual remembrance and affectionate respect for them must be cultivated when you are not, as well as when you are, ministering to them the word of life.

"Watch for them as one that must give an account:" take every favourable opportunity of speaking to them on the great concerns of eternity, and the weighty subjects of revealed truth. If you see any of them departing from the right way into that of sin, remember it is said, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother, but shalt reprove him." A neglect of reproof in such circumstances would have all the bad consequences of hatred; for thus he would be left to lie under the greatest evil from which you might deliver him. No fear of giving offence should prevent you from reproving, with meekness and faithfulness, the most opulent, or even the most valued friends of the society, if it be needful. If their misconduct does not require to be brought before the church, yet do not neglect to speak to them in private, and administer what counsel or reproof the circumstances may demand.

Your people will look to you, as a minister, for consolation when they are in distress; when overwhelmed with personal, domestic, or other relative calamities: manifest towards them the tenderest sympathy, a disposition "to weep with them that weep," as well as to "rejoice with them that rejoice."

It will be especially your duty to attend to those who are beginning to seek and inquire after salvation. No

part of your office is more delicate than the giving instruction to awakened consciences, who desire rest, but know not where or how to obtain it. The impressions they have received are in danger of wearing off; sometimes they seem pressing forward, sometimes they seem drawing backward; sometimes they are the pupils of conscience, at others the pupils of appetite and custom.

Such will require great attention; and not to seize opportunities of advising and directing them, would be to neglect a duty in which you ought to abound. It is not for me to instruct you fully *how* you should do this. Be not, however, afraid to inculcate repentance. Teach them to expect salvation, not *for* their works, but *in* a course of attention to all the dictates of the divine will respecting faith and obedience. Cherish in them tenderness of conscience, guard them against "easily besetting sins," and, at the same time, warn them not to stop at any outward reformation, but to seek after an inward change, and the application of the blood of Jesus. Admonish them not to consider themselves as having already attained, or being already perfect; not to mistake what is preparatory for what is final, or to rest short of that connexion with Christ and conformity to him which are the pledge and commencement of life eternal.

Here we need divine assistance: it is best to learn these things in answer to prayer, and by habitual practice. As nothing but much practice, and an exact knowledge of the anatomy of the human frame, will make a skilful physician; so nothing but a knowledge of the human heart, and the efficacy of the gospel in healing the diseases of the soul, can teach us to bring men health and cure.

It will be useful to "exhort with much long-suffering, from house to house:" much is to be accomplished by those who have a talent for interesting and familiar religious conversation,—a talent which all should cultivate. Some ministers, by an exhibition of "the mind of Christ," and a recommendation of the truth, in private, have advanced religion even more than by their public ministry;

as an auxiliary, every one will find it beneficial, and it is impossible to overvalue it.

See that your social visits are conducted in the spirit of the gospel. Guard against levity. Whatever is innocent in mirth, if it be allowed, should only hold a subordinate place; and the dignity of the minister should always appear.

Do not seek to cultivate the good opinion and favour merely of those who are rich, or even of those who are endowed with intellectual treasures; nor seek the gratifications of the table, nor the indulgence of sensual appetites. Despise not the meanest of the flock; look not on them with eyes of the flesh, but with the eyes of the Spirit. You will then perceive that the distinctions of wealth, or education, or intellect, are but little, compared with the state of *all* as responsible and immortal beings. The points of difference in men are nothing, compared with the common capacity for knowing and enjoying God. They are to be regarded principally as vessels capable of experiencing the wrath, or receiving the mercy, of the Almighty.

Look upon them now, as you will look upon them on a dying bed: you will not think of them *then* as rich or poor, as learned or unlearned; but as sanctified or unsanctified, as "sheep or goats," as the righteous or the wicked, as persons with whom you are to rejoice for ever, or whose final ruin you must witness at the last day. Let nothing render you negligent of the improvement and comfort of any one. Remember who hath said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea." There is not *one* whose soul is not precious in the estimation of the Lord, not one for whom he has not shed his blood, not one for whom he would not have been ready to shed his blood, had no other soul existed. Let the dignity of human nature, viewed in this light, arm you against being imposed upon by any adventitious circumstance.

In order that you may attend to these duties aright, cultivate a devotional spirit. The more you have of the mind of Christ, the more you walk in holiness and humility, the more "will your profiting appear." Watch against spiritual, as well as intellectual pride. Prostrate yourself in deep abasement before God. Remember, if you are saved, it is by an exercise of divine mercy, by an act of grace, which is the subject of admiration among the angels of God; and nothing is more incongruous than for "such an one" to be proud of any qualities he has received. Let it be evident that you are a good man, and one that makes progress in the things of God. This will produce a great effect. There is a silent eloquence in character, by which the best sermons are most powerfully recommended. Let *them*, however, be delivered with all sincerity, gravity, and affection: never speak with lightness or indifference; beware of all levity of spirit and of manner; avoid all canting and hypocritical terms and phrases; consider the weight of the subject before you; never study theatrical effect; all gestures and manœuvres, and display of *self*, by which some divines obtain so great admiration, are unworthy of your subject and your office. A sound preacher of the gospel will produce, not admiration of *himself*, but of the *truth*, and adoration of that God and Saviour from whom all truths proceed; remembering that awful account which ministers and people will all have to give, when they meet before his judgement-seat.

Sincerely aim to do good, and the Lord will be with you. Mr. Baxter said he never knew a minister who was sincerely desirous of benefiting souls that was not blessed with considerable success. The more you can go out of self, and lose all recollection of your own importance; the more you are impressed with the love of souls, the more will you be likely to manifest that truth which recommends itself "to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Let the consciences of your hearers be the subjects of your concern. Address their understanding and affec-

tions chiefly for the purpose of getting at their consciences.

I am aware of the difficulty of your situation, in consequence of your succeeding our most invaluable and incomparable brother, Mr. Fuller. It is not possible that you should, at present, attain to that profundity of mind, those extensive views, and that pointed statement of truth, which were possessed and evinced by him; but even the difficulty thus arising may be of use to you, as a stimulus to excite you to greater exertions. Should you be tempted to indolence, (which, however, I have no reason to suspect you will indulge,) the recollection of serving a people who have been blessed with such a minister, the consideration of what they will expect, may serve to rouse and animate you in your work.

Another circumstance I may refer to, as a motive peculiar to your present situation; and that is, the respectable minority which have been opposed to you. This may also be overruled to your advantage, if you are more watchful over your temper and conduct (I do not say than you have been, but) than you might have been if you had been carried down the stream of universal applause; and, if it excite you to conciliation and kindness towards those who oppose themselves, it may have the happiest effect on their minds, and will certainly raise and establish your character as a minister of the meek and lowly Saviour.

I need not warn you, because you have always guarded against any thing personal in your ministry towards those who have not fixed their choice on you. You will be ready to treat them with the same kindness which you manifest to others. It is not to be wondered at, (considering whom you follow, and some particular circumstances which are well known, but need not be mentioned,) that there should be a part of the church who could not act with the rest in their choice; but it will be well if you can manage these circumstances for your advantage and the furtherance of the gospel.

I shall not detain you longer than to remind you

whence it is that you are to derive the strength and wisdom necessary to prepare you for your work; and I cannot do this better than in the language of Paul to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!" Be strong! How strangely does this exhortation sound! To tell a man that is weak to be strong, would be absurd; but what would be absurd in philosophy is true and perfectly consistent with the gospel. Be strong in the grace of Christ, for his grace is communicable; and the power of Christ rests on those who seek it with a sense of their own weakness.

We are directed to seek it by prayer, and thus to be strong. Look to the Lord for all the assistance you need. Remember how dependent you are. Look to the Father and the Son: be not afraid of praying to the Son of God as Paul did; it is often more consolatory than prayer in any other form.*

You are a sinner redeemed; but you are a preacher of the word placed over this people, not to tyrannize, but to walk before them in the Lord: in hearing your voice, they should hear him; in following your footsteps, they should follow him. Your employment is that of the Son of God: it makes no appearance before the eyes of worldly men; but it will arise in a form of majesty to overshadow all created glory. Its effects will be known and felt in souls that shall enjoy Christ in his kingdom for ever, or in spirits in whom the work of death shall be finished.

Keep the commandments of Christ committed to you, without reproach. Endeavour to "present every man faultless before God." Your happiness will be diminished if one be wanting. Be concerned to "give up your account with joy, and not with grief."

Labour, that not one of those that hear you, not one that has sat down at the table of the Lord, not one to whom you have "given the right hand of fellowship," should be excluded when the Lord cometh.

See to it, that you are not excluded yourself. So

* See letter to W. Hollick, Esq. Vol. I. p. 344.—Ed

preach as to "save yourself, and them that hear you." It is possible for a man to bring others to Christ for salvation, and yet not be saved himself. You may preach to others, and yet be a castaway. You need grace, but do not despair. The grace of the Saviour is sufficient for you: "His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness."*

* Mr. John Keen Hall, to whom this charge was addressed, was Mr. Hall's nephew; a circumstance which, while it may serve to account for the minuteness of some of the exhortations, in my judgement adds to their interest. Mr. J. K. Hall, who had been Mr. Fuller's colleague, survived him only fifteen years: he died in 1829.

Mr. Hillyard, to whose kindness I am indebted for the notes here published, is anxious it should be understood that his main object was to preserve *the substance* of the charge. It was seldom, indeed, that he succeeded in catching the precise language; and, towards the end, several sublime and most impressive sentences were entirely lost, from his yielding himself to the stream of feeling excited by the preacher.—Ed.

ON THE ART OF HEALING.

[From Mr. Hall's own Notes. Not published before.]

Matt. ix. 12.—*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

That the sick need a physician,* is an assertion which appeals to the dictates of common sense. Among the innumerable benefactions issuing from a wise and gracious Providence, the art of healing is not to be considered as the least. For, though it is far from having reached the perfection which we naturally desire, or which may be attainable, its efficiency is such, as ought to inspire the most unfeigned gratitude to the Author of every good and perfect gift. By the cure of many, and the mitigation of most, of the diseases to which the human frame is incident, the total amount of ease, comfort, and refreshment, which it confers, is incalculable. In judicious hands it is the handmaid of nature, while it obeys her indications and assists her efforts. It never acts apart, but always in a vigilant and judicious subserviency to her fundamental laws and her salutary tendencies. It is well known that there is in all living substances a certain *vis medicatrix*, a certain effort at self-provision, an inherent and powerful tendency to recover itself from the injury it may have sustained, a principle of active resistance to the progress of disease and decay. A property of this kind seems to be inseparable from

* This constituted part of a sermon that was preached for the Leicester Infirmary, from the above text, on Sunday, May 29, 1825.—Ed.

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life in all its diversified modes and appearances; and nothing, surely, can afford a plainer demonstration of the benign character of the Deity.

When a bone is fractured, nothing more is necessary than to place the parts, which accident has separated, in their original juxta-position, and they will very soon adhere; an exudation from the bones takes place, which forms a collar of so firm a texture, that the parts often become more perfectly united than before: it is scarcely ever known that a bone is fractured twice in the same place. When the fleshy parts are separated by a wound, and a considerable chasm ensues, the self-restorative power of nature forms new flesh, produces a new set of vessels for the circulation of the blood: the interstice is filled up, and the continuity of the parts is by degrees perfectly restored. The indication of design in such a process is just as evident as in restoring communication betwixt two places, by repairing the broken arches of a bridge.

In constant subserviency to this mysterious law, the skilful physician explores the secret affinities subsisting betwixt the living substance which composes the body and the material elements which surround it. By a sublime process of experiment and induction, he has ascertained, to a great extent, the relation which the corporeal frame sustains to the various objects, both natural and artificial, with which the stores of nature are fraught. He has extorted her secrets, and has summoned her powers in aid of human distress and infirmity. He has fetched from the bowels of the [earth], from the caverns of the ocean, and from the boundless fields of air, the most powerful antidotes to disease. He has levied a contribution from all the departments and provinces of nature, and compelled them to yield their service to man, in all the varieties of physical disorder to which he is exposed; and, whether it be requisite to brace or to relax the [fibres] of the breathing frame, to retard or to accelerate its motion, to stimulate or to depress, to quicken its energies or to allay its agitations, he makes them minister to his purpose, and become the

agents of his will. He has discovered the art of converting into useful ingredients, substances deemed essentially noxious, and of extracting antidotes from poisons. Thus he vindicates from rash and presumptuous imputations the beneficence of nature or of its great Author, by showing that all which "he has made is very good."

A large portion of the ingenuity and industry of mankind is incessantly exerted in multiplying the pleasures of the opulent, giving a higher zest to the fruitions of luxury, and gratifying the caprices of vanity and pride; and, such is the mechanism of society, that even from these the poor are fed and the indigent relieved. With the physician, however, it is far otherwise. He interposes in the moment of exigence, and obeys the call of distress. He administers the cordial to the fainting spirit, rekindles the expiring lamp of hope, and [often] decks the countenance with smiles, which death, under the ravages of disease, had marked for his victim and covered with his shade. He leaves it to others to accompany the human race in their revelry and their triumphs: while they bask on the bosom of the ocean, or spread their sails to the wind, he presents himself on the shore, and rescues the shipwrecked mariner from the waves. With a silent and invisible energy he contends with the powers of destruction, and often rescues from the grave him that [seemed] "appointed to death."

If he conducts the objects of his care sometimes through painful processes, his proceeding resembles, in that respect, the conduct of the gracious Author of our being, who afflicts with paternal reluctance, and smites but to heal. From the practice of an enlightened professor of the healing art, nothing is more remote than the infliction of unnecessary suffering, or wanton and unfeeling experiments on the powers of human endurance. His hand never administers an uneasy sensation, but with a view to the future comfort of his patient: nor is he the author of a single privation or restraint but what is designed for his good.

Considered in their leading features, its ministrations are a beautiful imitation of those of Divine Providence.

Both are designed to restore what is lost, and to repair what is disordered; both have the production of ease and happiness for their ultimate object; both frequently make use of pains and privations as the means of procuring it, but neither of them [employ] an atom more of these than is deemed requisite for that purpose.

Hence it will probably be found that the medical profession has furnished more examples of active and enlightened humanity than any other walk or profession. Being daily and hourly conversant with scenes of misery the contrary, it would seem at first, might have been expected. It might have been thought that habit would render [medical men] callous and indifferent to those varieties of suffering that so frequently offer themselves to their view. That the effect of such familiarity is to impair the force of pity, considered merely as an emotion may be very probable. It is well it is so; for if their nerves were unstrung, and their hand to tremble at the witnessing of pain and agony, like those who were unused to such spectacles, they would be totally disabled from executing their functions. But humanity, considered as an active propensity to alleviate human distress, is improved and maintained in wholesome exercise by the benevolence of the end, notwithstanding the occasional severity of the means. The mind of a physician is continually pregnant with expedients for the mitigation of pain, the extinction of disease, and the prolongation of life; a course of thinking which cannot fail to cultivate and mature the seeds of benevolence. His success is in exact proportion to the benefits he imparts: his triumphs are signalized by the tears of gratitude, the gratulations of friendship, and the raptures of returning health.

How striking is the contrast betwixt the art of medicine and the art of war! The last has for its object the destruction, the first the preservation, of the species. The mind of the warrior teems with machinations of ruin, and anxiously revolves, among different schemes that present themselves, which shall scatter destruction to the widest extent and with the surest aim: his progress is marked by devastation and blood, by depopulated fields and smoking villages, and the laurels which he wears are bedewed with the tears of widows and orphans. The acclamations which he wins from one portion of his species are answered by the curses and execrations of another; and the delusive splendour, the proud and imposing array, with which he contrives to gild the horrors of his profession, are but the pomp and retinue of the king of terrors.* The art of healing proceeds with a silence and secrecy, like the great processes of nature, to scatter blessings on all within its reach; and the couch of sickness the silent retreat of sorrow and despair, are the scene of its triumphs.

The little applause which is bestowed on physicians, compared with what is so lavishly heaped on conquerors, conveys a bitter reflection on human nature; by showing how much we suffer ourselves to be the dupes of our senses, to extol the brilliant rather than the useful; whereas, a just and impartial estimate would compel us to assign to skilful practitioners of medicine the very first rank among merely human professions. For, when we consider the varieties of ills to which we are exposed, and how large a portion is derived from bodily infirmities, it will appear that we are more indebted to their assistance than to [that of] any other class of persons whatever.

Nor are the reflections in which we have indulged, and the train of thought we have pursued, foreign to the immediate purpose of the present discourse, which is to invite your assistance in repairing the funds of the Leicester Infirmary, an institution which you are aware has been productive of incalculable good. Open to the sick of all denominations, it assembles within its walls the victims of poverty and disease of every description, and provides for them the most suitable diet, skilful advice, and assiduous attentions; of each of which the greater part of its patients must necessarily have remained destitute, but for this excellent charity. If we

* The author seems here to have borrowed a little, perhaps unconsciously, from himself. See Vol. II. p. 73, &c.—Ed.

are convinced of the utility and dignity of the medical and chirurgical arts; if we are satisfied how much they contribute to the comfort and the preservation of life, we are prepared to appreciate the value of that charity which proposes for its object the extension of these advantages to the poor; nor is it possible to extend them so far by any other provision as by the support of a public asylum.

To administer equal medical assistance and attendance to an equal number at their own abodes, would be accompanied by an augmentation of expense which would render it insupportable. By collecting the victims of disease in our asylum, and placing them under one system of administration, not only is economy consulted by an immense saving of expense; but the improvement of science is promoted, by presenting a wide field of observation on the great varieties of malady which fall under the notice of the practitioners.

By this system also, a course of wholesome religious instruction is secured, under circumstances the most favourable to its reception.

* * * * * *

The chemical lectures, delivered by the ablest professors in our public hospitals, furnish the most important branch of medical instruction, and are adapted to benefit generations yet unborn.

* * * * * *

The erection of hospitals and infirmaries for the poor, is one of the distinguishing ornaments and fruits of christianity, unknown to the wisdom and humanity of pagan times. Compassionate consideration of the poor formed no part of the lessons of pagan philosophy; its genius was too arrogant and lofty to stoop to the children of want and obscurity. It soared in sublime speculation, wasted its strength in endless subtleties and debates; but, among the rewards to which it aspired, it never thought of "the blessedness of him that considereth the poor." You might have traversed the Roman empire, in the zenith of its power, from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, without meeting with a single charitable asylum

for the sick. Monuments of pride, of ambition, of vindictive wrath, were to be found in abundance; but not one legible record of commiseration for the poor. It was reserved for the religion, whose basis is humility, and whose element is devotion, to proclaim with authority, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

There are few of us, I trust, who are prepared to regard the privations of poverty alone, with indifference; much less when, combined with sickness, its victim is reduced to the last stage of helplessness. When the hands which ministered, not only to their own necessities but to those of a numerous family, are debilitated with disease, and unnerved with sickness, the most complicated distress must necessarily ensue. Were it not for the ministration of piety, the calamity would be insupportable. In many situations, the earnings of labour are but barely sufficient for the sustenance of life on its lowest terms; no savings can be made; no superfluity be retrenched; and what must be the state of such a family when that labour is suspended by the invasion of disease? But for such asylums as these, the consequences would be too dreadful for human contemplation.

(Sickness incident to all, and therefore a proper object of commiseration.)

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last hope, in the sudden removal of one, in whose bosom she might naturally hope to repose her griefs, and find a peaceful haven from the storms of life and the tossings of the ocean. But above all, the illustrious consort of this lamented Princess is entitled to the deepest commiseration. How mysterious are the ways of Providence, in rendering the virtues of this distinguished personage the source of his greatest trials! By these he merited the distinction to which monarchs aspired in vain, and by these he exposed himself to a reverse of fortune, the severity of which can only be adequately estimated by this illustrious mourner. These virtues, however, will not be permitted to lose their reward. They will find it in the grateful attachment of the British nation, in the remembrance of his having contributed the principal share to the happiness of the most amiable and exalted of women; and, above all, we humbly hope, when the agitations of time shall cease, in a re-union with the object of his attachment, before the presence of Him who will *wipe every tear from the eye.*

When Jehovah was pleased to command Isaiah the prophet to make a public proclamation in the ears of the people, what was it, think you, he was ordered to announce? Was it some profound secret of nature, which had baffled the inquiries of philosophers? or some great political convulsion which was to change the destiny of empires? No: these were not the sort of communications most suited to the grandeur of his nature, or the exigencies of ours. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.** Instead of presenting to our eyes the mutations of power, and the revolutions of states and kingdoms, he exhibits a more awful and affecting spectacle—the human race itself withering

* Isaiah xl. 6—8.

under the breath of his mouth, perishing under his rebuke; while he plants his eternal word, which subsists from generation to generation, in undecaying vigour, to console our wretchedness, and impregnate the dying mass with the seed of immortality. As the frailty of man, and the perpetuity of *his* promises, are the greatest contrast the universe presents, so the practical impression of this truth, however obvious, is the beginning of wisdom, nor is there a degree of moral elevation to which it will not infallibly conduct us.

The annunciation of life and immortality by the gospel, did it contain no other truth, were sufficient to cast all the discoveries of science into shade, and to reduce the highest improvements of reason to the comparative nothingness which the flight of a moment bears to eternity.

By this discovery, the prospects of human nature are infinitely widened, the creature of yesterday becomes the child of eternity; and as felicity is not the less valuable in the eye of reason because it is remote, nor the misery which is certain, less to be deprecated because it is not immediately felt, the care of our future interests becomes our chief, and properly speaking, our only concern. All besides will shortly be nothing; and therefore, whenever it comes into competition with these, it is as the small dust of the balance.

Is it now any subject of regret, think you, to this amiable Princess, so suddenly removed, *that her sun went down while it was yet day?* or that, prematurely snatched from prospects the most brilliant and enchanting, she was compelled to close her eyes so soon on a world, of whose grandeur she formed so conspicuous a part? No: other objects occupy her mind, other thoughts engage her attention, and will continue to engage it for ever. All things with her are changed; and viewed from that pure and ineffable light, for which we humbly hope religion prepared her, the lustre of a diadem is scarcely visible, majesty emits a feeble and sickly ray, and all ranks and conditions of men appear but so many troops of pilgrims, in different garbs, toiling through the same

vale of tears, distinguished only by different degrees of wretchedness.

In the full fruition of eternal joys, she is so far from looking back with lingering regret on what she has quitted, that she is surprised it had the power of affecting her so much; that she took so deep an interest in the scenes of this shadowy state of being, while so near to an *eternal weight of glory;* and, as far as memory may be supposed to contribute to her happiness by associating the present with the past, it is not the recollection of her illustrious birth and elevated prospects, but that she visited the abodes of the poor, and learned to weep with those that weep; that, surrounded with the fascinations of pleasure, she was not inebriated by its charms; that she resisted the strongest temptations to pride, preserved her ears open to truth, was impatient of the voice of flattery; in a word, that she sought and cherished the inspirations of piety, and *walked humbly with her God.** This is fruit which survives when the flower withers—the only ornaments and treasures we can carry into eternity.

While we look at this event with the eyes of flesh, and survey it in the aspect it bears towards our national prospects, it appears a most singular and affecting catastrophe. But considered in itself, or, more properly, in its relation to a certain, though invisible futurity, its consequences are but commensurate to those which result from the removal of the meanest individual. He whose death is as little regarded as the fall of a leaf in the forest, and he whose departure involves a nation in despair, are, in this view of the subject, (by far the most important one,) upon a level. Before the presence of the great I AM, into which they both immediately enter, these distinctions vanish, and the true statement of the fact, on either supposition, is, that an immortal spirit has finished its earthly career; has passed the barriers of

* From the obscurity of the Author's situation, he must be supposed incapable of authenticating these traits in her character from his personal knowledge; but from the respectable publications in which they are related, he entertains no doubt of their truth.

the invisible world, to appear before its Maker, in order to receive that sentence which will fix its irrevocable doom, *according to the deeds done in the body*. On either supposition, an event has taken place which has no parallel in the revolutions of time, the consequences of which have not room to expand themselves within a narrower sphere than an endless duration. An event has occurred, the issues of which must ever baffle and elude all finite comprehensions, by concealing themselves in the depths of that abyss, of that eternity, which is the dwelling-place of Deity, where there is sufficient space for the destiny of each, among the innumerable millions of the human race, to develope itself, and without interference or confusion, to sustain and carry forward its separate infinity of interest.

That there is nothing hyperbolic or extravagant in these conceptions, but, that they are the *true sayings of God*, you may learn from almost every page of the sacred oracles. For what are they, in fact, but a different mode of announcing the doctrine taught us in the following words: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?*

When it is considered that the doctrine of a life to come, is ascertained by the advent of the Messiah, with a degree of evidence so superior to that which attaches to any other futurity, that he who refuses to believe it on his testimony, would not be persuaded although one rose from the dead, the propensity to disregard it, however general, is the most astonishing phenomenon in nature. Man is naturally a prospective creature, endowed, not only with a capacity of comparing the present with the past, but also of anticipating the future, and dwelling with anxious rumination on scenes which are yet remote. He is capable of carrying his views, of attaching his anxieties, to a period much more distant than that which measures the limits of his present existence; capable, we distinctly perceive, of plunging into the depths of future duration, of identifying himself with the sentiments and opinions of a distant age, and of enjoying, by anticipation, the fame of which he is aware he shall never be conscious, and the praises he shall never hear. So strongly is he disposed to link his feelings with futurity, that shadows become realities, when contemplated as subsisting there; and the phantom of posthumous celebrity, the faint image of his being, impressed on future generations, is often preferred to the whole of his present existence, with all its warm and vivid realities. The complexion of the day that is passing over him, is determined by the anticipations of the morrow: the present borrows its brightness and its gloom from the future, which, presenting itself to his contemplation, as in a mirror, incessantly agitates him with apparitions of terror or delight. In the calculations of interest, the mind is affected in the same manner; it is perpetuity which stamps its value on whatever we possess, so that the lowest epicure would prefer a small accession to his property to the most exquisite repast; and none are found so careless of futurity, as not to prefer the inheritance he may bequeath, to one of equal value, the title to which expires with his life.

How is it, then, that we find it so difficult to prevail upon men to fix their attention firmly on another world, that real future existence which reason assures us is probable, which revelation teaches us is certain, which is separated from us by so narrow a boundary, and into which thousands of our fellow-creatures are passing every moment? How is it that the professed followers of Him especially, who descended from heaven, who *came forth from the Father* to conduct us thither, are so indisposed to turn their thoughts and contemplations to that unchanging state of being, into which they are so shortly to enter? It is not, we perceive, that to move forward is not congenial with our mental constitution: it is not because we are so enchanted with the present scene, as to be incapable of diverting our attention from it; for we are continually disquieted by a restless desire of something future: it is not because we are seldom warned or reminded of another state of existence; for every funeral bell, every opening grave, every symptom of decay within,

and of change without us, is a separate warning, to say nothing of the present most affecting dispensation, which has filled this nation with such consternation and distress.

Were any other event of far inferior moment ascertained by evidence, which made but a distant approach to that which attests the certainty of a life to come; had we equal assurance that after a very limited, though uncertain period, we should be called to migrate into a distant land, whence we were never to return, the intelligence would fill every breast with solicitude; it would become the theme of every tongue; and we should avail ourselves with the utmost eagerness of all the means of information respecting the prospects which awaited us in that unknown country. Much of our attention would be occupied in preparing for our departure; we should cease to regard the place we now inhabit as our home, and nothing would be considered of moment but as it bore upon our future destination. How strange is it, then, that, with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect; that we seldom permit it to penetrate us; and that the moment the recollection occurs, we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion! Is it not surprising, that the volume we profess to recognise as the record of immortality, and the sole depository of whatever information it is possible to obtain respecting the portion which awaits us, should be consigned to neglect, and rarely, if ever, consulted with the serious intention of ascertaining our future condition?

That a creature formed for an endless duration should be disposed to turn his attention from that object, and to contract his views and prospects within a circle which, compared to eternity, is but a mathematical point, is truly astonishing; and as it is impossible to account for it from the natural constitution of the mind, it must originate in some great *moral* cause. It shows that some strange catastrophe has befallen the species; that some deep and radical malady is inherent in the moral system

Though philosophers of a certain description may attempt to explain and justify it on some ingenious hypothesis; yet, in spite of metaphysical subtleties, the alarming inquiry will still return—How is it that the disposition of mankind is so much at variance with their prospects? that no train of reflections is more unwelcome than that which is connected with their eternal home? If the change is considered as a happy one,—if the final abode to which we are hastening is supposed to be an improvement on the present, why shrink back from it with aversion? If it is contemplated as a state of suffering, it is natural to inquire what it is that has invested it with so dark and sombre a character! What is it which has enveloped that species of futurities in a gloom which pervades no other? If the indisposition to realize a life to come arises in any measure from a vague presentiment that it will bring us, so to speak, into a closer contact with the Deity, by presenting clearer manifestations of his character and perfections, (and who can doubt that this is a principal cause?) the proof it affords of a great deterioration in our moral condition is complete. For who will suppose it possible a disposition to hide himself from his Creator should be an original part of the constitution of a reasonable creature? or what more portentous and unnatural, than for him that is formed to shun the presence of his Maker, and to place his felicity in the forgetfulness of Him *in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being?* If he is pained and disquieted whenever he is forcibly reminded of Him whose power sustains, and whose bounty replenishes the universe with whatever is good and fair; if the source of being and of happiness is the object of terror instead of confidence and love, it is not easy to conceive what can afford a stronger conviction of guilt, or a more certain presage of danger.

The conclusion to which we are conducted is confirmed by inspiration, which assures us that a great revolution has actually befallen the species; and that, in consequence of the entrance of sin into the world, we have incurred the forfeiture of the divine favour, and the

loss of the divine image. In this situation it is not difficult to perceive, that the economy adapted to our relief must include two things, the means of expiating guilt, and the means of moral renovation: in other words, an atoning sacrifice, and a sanctifying Spirit. Both these objects are accomplished in the advent of the Saviour, who, by presenting himself as a sin-offering, has made ample satisfaction to offended justice, and purchased by his merits the renovating Spirit, which is freely offered to as many as sincerely seek it. By the former, the obstructions to our happiness arising from the divine nature, are removed; by the latter, the disqualification springing from our own. By providing a sacrifice of infinite value in the person of the Only Begotten, he has consulted his majesty as the righteous Governor of the world, and has reconciled the seemingly incompatible claims of justice and of mercy. By bestowing the Spirit as the fruit of *his* mediation and intercession, whose *soul was made an offering for sin*, pollution is purged, and that image of God restored to sinful creatures, which capacitates them for the enjoyment of pure and perfect felicity. Thus every requisite which we can conceive necessary in a restorative dispensation, is found in the gospel, exhibited with a perspicuity level to the meanest capacity, combined with such a depth in the contrivance, and such an exquisite adaptation to our state and condition, as surpass finite comprehension. This is the substance of those glad tidings which constitute the *gospel;* to the cordial reception of which, must all the difference be ascribed, which will shortly be found between the condition of the saved and the lost.

Be assured, my christian brethren, it is by a profound submission of the soul to this doctrine, offensive as it may be to the pride of human virtue, repugnant as it undoubtedly is to the dictates of philosophy, falsely so called, that we must *acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.* When we mention peace, however, we mean not the stupid security of a mind that refuses to reflect; we mean a tranquillity which rests upon an unshaken basis, which no anticipations, however remote, no

power of reflection, however piercing or profound, no evolutions which time may disclose or eternity conceal, are capable of impairing; a peace which is founded on the oath and promise of Him who cannot lie; which, springing from the consciousness of an ineffable alliance with the Father of spirits, makes us to share in his fulness, to become a partner with him in his eternity; a repose, pure and serene as the unruffled wave, which reflects the heavens from its bosom, while it is accompanied with a feeling of exultation and triumph, natural to such as are conscious that ere long, having overcome, they shall possess all things.

While the prize is so transcendently great, no unparalleled efforts, no incredible exertions, are requisite to obtain it; it is placed within the grasp of every hand. If the great sacrifice had not been presented, if the succours of heaven had not been offered, if the glad tidings had not been proclaimed, nor life and immortality brought to light, our condition would indeed have been deplorable; and little encouragement should we have had, to engage in the great work of seeking salvation. But now *all things are ready*, and the chief, or, rather, the only prerequisite, is a child-like docility, a disposition to derive wisdom from the fountain of light, strength from the strong, together with a fixed and immovable conviction, that the care of our eternal interests is the grand concern.

Some events, by the established course of nature, are rendered so certain, that, however important in their consequences, they are not the proper subjects of deliberation. Their certainty, assumed as a basis in all our calculations and reasonings, is entitled to great weight in adjusting the plan of future operation; but it is with a view to other objects that our schemes are formed, and our anxiety exerted. Other events are precluded from deliberation by an opposite reason, the perfect conviction that they will never arrive. Both these are regarded by wise men as fixed, immovable points, which supply motives for submission, but no incentives to exertion.

There is another class of futurities, whose existence is

not ascertained by immutable, independent causes; they are placed in some measure within our reach, are subjected in a degree to our control, and are neither so certain as to produce security, nor so impossible or improbable as to occasion despair. These form the motives to human activity, and the objects of rational pursuit; in the proper selection of which, and the application of means best adapted to their attainment, consists the whole wisdom of man. The hopes and fears associated with the contemplation of events of this nature, are the springs which set mankind in motion; and while the frivolous and the dissipated fix their attention on such as are productive of transient and momentary impressions, the wise in their generation select those which are the basis of permanent interests, such as wealth, power, and reputation; which, whoever acquires by a course of strenuous exertion, is applauded and extolled as a pattern for universal imitation. Yet, what extreme shortsightedness characterizes the most prosperous votary of the world, compared with the humblest candidate for immortality! *This their way is their folly, though their posterity approve their sayings.* Of the great prizes in human life, it is not often the lot of the most enterprising to obtain many: they are placed on opposite sides of the path, so that it is impossible to approach one of them, without proportionably receding from another; whence it results that the wisest plans are founded on a compromise between good and evil, where much that is the object of desire is finally relinquished and abandoned, in order to secure superior advantages. The candidate for immortality is reduced to no such alternative: the possession of his object comprehends all: it combines in itself, without imperfection and without alloy, all the scattered portions of good for which the votaries of the world are accustomed to contend. Such also is our constitution, and so little is the sublunary state adapted to be our rest, that we are usually more alive to the good we want, than to that which we possess; that, rendered delicate by indulgence, rather than satiated by enjoyment, the slightest check in the career of our desires, inflicts a wound which their gratification in every other particular is incapable of healing. Thus the wretched Haman, in the highest plenitude of affluence and power, exclaimed, *All this availeth me nothing, while Mordecai sits in the gate.* Such is the capricious fastidiousness of the human heart, chiefly in those who are most pampered with the gifts of fortune, that the person whom nothing has the power of gratifying long, the merest trifle is sufficient to displease, so that he is often extremely chagrined and disquieted by the absence of that, whose presence would scarcely be felt. The fruition of religious objects calms and purifies, as much as it delights; it strengthens, instead of enervating, the mind, which it fills without agitating, and, by settling it on its proper basis, diffuses an unspeakable repose through all its powers.

As the connexion between means and ends is not so indissolubly fixed as to preclude the possibility of disappointment, and *the battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor riches to men of understanding*, the votary of the world is never secure of his object, which frequently mocks his pursuit, by vanishing at the moment when he is just on the point of seizing it. He often possesses not even the privilege of failing with impunity, and has no medium left between complete success and infallible destruction. In the struggles of ambition, in violent competitions for power or for glory, how slender the partition betwixt the widest extremes of fortune, and how few the steps and apparently slight the circumstances, which sever the throne from the prison, the palace from the tomb! *So Tibni died*, says the sacred historian, with inimitable simplicity, *and Omri reigned.* He who makes the care of his eternal interests his chief pursuit, is exposed to no such perils and vicissitudes. His hopes will be infallibly crowned with success. The soil on which he bestows his labour will infinitely more than recompense his care; and however disproportioned the extent and duration of his efforts to the magnitude of their object, however insufficient to secure it by their intrinsic vigour, the faithfulness of

God is pledged to bring them to a prosperous issue. *Ask*, said our Lord, *and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For whosoever asketh receiveth; and whosoever seeketh findeth; and whosoever knocketh, to him it shall be opened.* The pursuit of salvation is the only enterprise in which no one fails from weakness, none from an invincible ignorance of futurity, none from the sudden vicissitudes of fortune, against which there exists no effectual security, none from those occasional eclipses of knowledge and fits of inadvertence, to which the most acute and wakeful intellect is exposed. How suitable is it to the character of the Being who reveals himself by the name of *Love*, to render the object which is alone worthy of being aspired to with ardour, the only one to which all may, without presumption, aspire; and while he conceals thrones and sceptres in the shadow of his hand, and bestows them where he pleases, with a mysterious and uncontrollable sovereignty, on opening the springs of eternal felicity, to proclaim to the utmost bounds of the earth, *Let him that is athirst come: and whomsoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely.*

But the impotence of the world never appears more conspicuous than when it has exhausted its powers in the gratification of its votaries, by placing them in a situation which leaves them nothing further to hope. It frustrates the sanguine expectations of its admirers as much by what it bestows, as by what it withholds, and reserves its severest disappointment for the season of possession. The agitation, the uncertainty, the varied emotions of hope and fear which accompany the pursuit of worldly objects, create a powerful interest, and maintain a brisk and wholesome circulation; but when the pursuit is over, unless some other is substituted in its place, satiety succeeds to enjoyment, and pleasures cease to please. Tired of treading the same circle, of beholding the same spectacles, of frequenting the same amusements, and repeating the same follies, with nothing to awaken sensibility, or to stimulate to action, the minion of

fortune is exposed to an insuperable languor; he sinks under an insupportable weight of ease, and falls a victim to incurable dejection and despondency. Religion, by presenting objects ever interesting and ever new, by bestowing much, by promising more, and dilating the heart with the expectation of a certain *indefinite* good, clearly ascertained, though indistinctly seen, the pledge and earnest of which is far more delightful than all that irreligious men possess, is the only effectual antidote to this evil. *He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst.* The vanity which adheres to the world in every form, when its pleasures and occupations are regarded as *ultimate objects*, is at once corrected when they are viewed in connexion with a boundless futurity; and whatever may be their intrinsic value, they rise into dignity and importance when considered as the seed of a future harvest, as the path which, however obscure, leads to honour and immortality, as the province of labour allotted us, in order to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling.* Nothing is little which is related to such a system; nothing vain or frivolous which has the remotest influence on such prospects. Considered as a state of probation, our present condition loses all its inherent meanness; it derives a moral grandeur even from the shortness of its duration, when viewed as a contest for an immortal crown, in which the candidates are exhibited on a theatre, a spectacle to beings of the highest order, who, conscious of the tremendous importance of the issue, of the magnitude of the interest at stake, survey the combatants from on high with benevolent and trembling solicitude.

Finally, we are *made* for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness; it is our high calling and destination; and not to pursue it with diligence, is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude to the Author of our being, as well as the greatest cruelty to ourselves. To fail of such an object, to defeat the end of our existence, and, in consequence of neglecting the great salvation, to sink at last under the frown of the Almighty, is a calamity which words were not invented to express, nor finite

minds formed to grasp. Eternity, it is surely not necessary to remind you, invests every state, whether of bliss or of suffering, with a mysterious and awful importance, entirely its own, and is the only property in the creation which gives that weight and moment to whatever it attaches, compared to which, all sublunary joys and sorrows, all interests which know a period, fade into the most contemptible insignificance. In appreciating every other object, it is easy to exceed the proper estimate; and even of the distressing event which has so recently occurred, the feeling which many of us possess, is probably inadequate to the occasion. The nation has certainly not been wanting in the proper expression of its poignant regret at the sudden removal of this most lamented Princess, nor of their sympathy with the royal family, deprived by this visitation of its brightest ornament. Sorrow is painted in every countenance, the pursuits of business and of pleasure have been suspended, and the kingdom is covered with the signals of distress. But what, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth? or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?

But it is time to draw the veil over this heart-withering prospect, remembering only *what manner of persons we ought to be*, who are walking on the brink of such an eternity, and possess no assurance but that the next moment will convey us to the regions of happiness or of despair. Impressed habitually with this solemn recollection, we shall *rejoice as those who rejoice not, we shall weep as those who weep not, we shall use the world as not abusing it, remembering that the end of all things is at hand.*

It is scarcely to be supposed that so remarkable an example of the frailty and uncertainty of life as the recent providence has displayed, has failed of impressing serious reflection on the minds of multitudes; it is difficult to conceive of that degree of insensibility which could totally resist such a warning. But there is reason to fear that in a great majority of instances it has produced no salutary fruit, and will leave them, after a very short period, as careless and unconcerned about a preparation for an hereafter as before; like the unthinking feathered tribe, who, when one of the number falls by the hand of the fowler, are scared for a moment, and fly from the fatal spot with screams of horror, but quickly recovering their confidence, alight again on the same place, and expose themselves to the same danger. Thus many, whose gaiety has been eclipsed, and whose thoughtless career of irreligion and dissipation has experienced a momentary check, will doubtless soon return with eager impetuosity to the same course, as *the horse rusheth into battle.* The same amusements will enchant, the same society corrupt, and the same temptations ensnare them; with this very important difference, that the effort necessary to surmount the present impression will superinduce a fresh degree of obduration, by which they will become more completely accoutred in the panoply of darkness. The next visitation, though it may be in some respects more affecting, because more near, will probably impress them less; and as death has penetrated the palace in vain, though it should even come up into their chamber, and take away the delight of their eyes at a stroke, they will be less religiously moved.

What may we suppose is the reason of this; why are so many impressed, and so few profited? It is unquestionably because they are not obedient to the *first* suggestion of conscience. What that suggestion is, it may not be easy precisely to determine; but it certainly is *not* to make haste to efface the impression by frivolous amusement, by gay society, by entertaining reading, or

even by secular employment: it is probably to meditate and pray. Let the first whisper, be it what it may, of the internal monitor, be listened to as an oracle, as the still small voice which Elijah heard, when he wrapped his face in his mantle, recognizing it to be the voice of God. Be assured it will not mislead you; it will conduct you one step at least towards happiness and truth; and, by a prompt and punctual compliance with it, you will be prepared to receive ampler communications and superior light. If, after a serious retrospect of your past lives, of the objects you have pursued, and the principles which have determined your conduct, they appear to be such as will ill sustain the scrutiny of a dying hour, dare to be faithful to yourselves, and shun with horror that cruel treachery to your best interests, which would impel you to sacrifice the happiness of eternity to the quiet of a moment. Let the light of truth, which is the light of heaven, however painful for the present, be admitted in its full force; and whatever secrets it may discover *in the chambers of imagery*, while it unveils *still greater and greater abominations*, shrink not from the view, but entreat rather the assistance of Him whose prerogative it is to search the heart, and to try the reins, to render the investigation more profound and impartial. The sight of a penitent on his knees is a spectacle which moves heaven; and the compassionate Redeemer, who, when he beheld Saul in that situation, exclaimed, *Behold, he prayeth*, will not be slow or reluctant to strengthen you by his might, and console you by his Spirit. When a *new and living way* is opened *into the holiest of all*, by the blood of Jesus, not to avail ourselves of it, not to arise and go to our Father, but to prefer remaining at a guilty distance, encompassed with famine, to the rich and everlasting provisions of his house, will be a source of insupportable anguish when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, enter into the kingdom of God, and ourselves shut out. You are probably not aware of what importance it is to improve these sacred visitations; have not considered that they form a crisis, which if often neglected will never return. It is impossible too often to inculcate the momentous truth, that the character is not formed by passive impressions, but by voluntary actions, and that we shall be judged hereafter, not by what we have felt, but by what we have done.

You will perceive, my brethren, that I have confined my attention, in this discourse, to such reflections as we would wish every individual to indulge, in the contemplation of this great national calamity, without adverting to its aspect on the political prospects and interests of the country. The discussion of the subject in that view of it is equally unsuited to my province, and to my talents. I leave it to politicians to investigate the effects it is likely to produce on the prosperity of the British empire; esteeming myself sufficiently happy if I may be the humble instrument of fixing your attention on subjects best fitted to prepare you for *a kingdom which cannot be moved;* being convinced, as you may infer from my constant practice, that this is neither the place nor the season for political discussion, and that the teachers of religion are called to a nobler occupation than to subserve the interests of a party, or fan the flames of public dissension. In perfect consistence with this observation permit me to remark, that it appears to me highly presumptuous to attempt to scan the secret purpose of the Deity, in this dispensation, by assigning it to *specific* moral causes. *His ways are in the great deep, and his paths past finding out.* That it ought to be considered as a signal rebuke and chastisement, designed to bring our sins to remembrance, there is no doubt; but to attempt to specify the particular crimes and delinquencies which have drawn down this visitation, is inconsistent with the modesty which ought to accompany all inquiries into the mysteries of Providence; and especially repugnant to the spirit which this most solemn and affecting event should inspire. At a time when every creature ought to tremble under the judgements of God, it ill becomes us to indulge in reciprocal recrimination; and when *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint*, it is not for the members to usurp the seat of judgement, by hurling

accusations and reproaches against each other. Are there not sufficient provocations to be found in all ranks and classes, from the lowest to the highest, to justify and account for these and still greater severities? or is it necessary to look farther for the vindication of the equity of the divine proceeding, than to the open impiety and profaneness, the perjury and injustice, the profanation of the sabbath and contempt of sacred things, the profligacy of the lower, and the irreligion and impurity of the higher orders, which, notwithstanding the multitude of splendid exceptions, still form the national character?

That we are a people severely scourged and corrected, none will deny; but that we have *turned to him that smiteth us*, it would be presumption to assert. Yet if any people were ever more forcibly reminded of the interposition of Providence than another, it is certain we are that people; having been conducted through the most intricate and mysterious paths, in such a manner as totally to confound the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent, both in our adverse and prosperous fortunes. Preserved amidst the wreck of nations, and the hurricane of revolution which swept for twenty years over the face of Europe, with ruin and desolation in its train, we have not only been permitted to maintain our soil unviolated, and our independence unimpaired; but have come forth from a contest of unparalleled difficulty and extent, with a more splendid reputation, and in a more commanding attitude, than we possessed at any former period. Our successes, both by sea and land, have been so brilliant and decisive, that it is not easy to determine whether we have acquired most glory as a military or a maritime power; while our achievements on each element have been such as to distance all competition. A profound peace has at length succeeded to a scene of hostilities, which, for the fourth part of a century, covered the earth with armies, shook every kingdom to its basis, and ravaged and depopulated the fairest portion of the globe. But what has been the issue? We have retired from the combat, successful

indeed beyond our most sanguine expectations,—but bleeding, breathless, exhausted; with symptoms of internal weakness and decay, from which, if we ever entirely recover, it must be when the present generation has disappeared from the earth. When was it ever known before, that peace was more destructive than war? —that a people were more impoverished by their victories than their defeats? and that the epoch of their glory was the epoch of their sufferings? Peace, instead of being the nurse of industry and the harbinger of plenty, as the experience of ages had taught us to expect, has brought poverty, discontent, and distress in her train; inflicting all the privations of a state of hostility without its hopes; and all the miseries of war without its splendour. What but an Omnipotent hand could have infused such venom into the greatest of blessings as utterly to transform its nature, and cause it to produce some of the worst effects of the curse?

While we were engaged in the fearful struggle which has at length been so successfully terminated, it pleased the great Ruler of nations to visit our aged, beloved, and revered Monarch with one of the most dreadful calamities incident to human nature, the pressure of which still continues, we fear, with unabated severity. While we are deeply moved at the awful spectacle of majesty labouring under a permanent and hopeless eclipse, we are consoled with the reflection that he walked in the light while he possessed the light; that as long as the exercise of reason was continued, he communed with eternal truth; and that, from the shades which now envelope him, he will, at no very distant period, emerge into the brightness of celestial vision.

Though it may be difficult to conceive of a series of events more likely to awe the mind to a sense of the power and presence of the Deity, than those we have witnessed, he has thought fit to address us once more, if not in louder, yet in more solemn and affecting accents. An unexampled depopulation of the species by the sword, had indeed nearly rendered death the most familiar of all spectacles, and left few families unbereaved; but

neither the narrative of battles, nor the sight of carnage, is best suited to inculcate the lessons of mortality; nor are the moral features of that last enemy ever less distinctly discerned, than in the moments when he is most busy; or on those fields of slaughter, where he appears the principal agent. The "pomp and circumstance of war," the tumultuous emotions of the combatants, and the eager anxiety of the contending parties, attentive to the important political consequences attached to victory and defeat, absorb every other impression, and obstruct the entrance of serious and pensive reflection.

How different the example of mortality presented on the present occasion! Without the slightest warning, without the opportunity of a moment's immediate preparation, in the midst of the deepest tranquillity, at midnight, a voice was heard in the palace, not of singing men and singing women, not of revelry and mirth, but the cry, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.* The mother, in the bloom of youth, spared just long enough to hear the tidings of her infant's death, almost immediately, as if summoned by his spirit, follows him into eternity. "It is a night much to be remembered." Who foretold this event, who conjectured it, who detected at a distance the faintest presage of its approach, which, when it arrived, mocked the efforts of human skill, as much by their incapacity to prevent, as their inability to foresee it? Unmoved by the tears of conjugal affection, unawed by the presence of grandeur, and the prerogatives of power, inexorable Death hastened to execute his stern commission, leaving nothing to royalty itself, but to retire and weep. Who can fail to discern on this awful occasion, the hand of Him, who *bringeth princes to nothing, who maketh the judges of the earth as vanity; who says, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth; and he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble?*

It is better, says Solomon, *to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.* While there are few who are not, at some season or other, conducted to that house, *a nation* enters it on the present visitation, there to learn, in the sudden extinction of the heiress of her monarchy, the vanity of all but what relates to eternity, and the absolute necessity of having our *loins girt, our lamps burning, and ourselves as those who are looking for the coming of the Bridegroom.*

We presume there are none who can survey this signal interposition of Providence with indifference, or refrain from "laying it to heart." No, illustrious Princess, it will be long ere the name of Charlotte Augusta is mentioned by Britons without tears: remote posterity also, which shall peruse thy melancholy story, will "lay it to heart," and will be tempted to ask, why no milder expedient could suffice to correct our levity, and make us mindful of our latter end; while they look back with tender pity on the amiable victim, who seems to have been destined by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, to warn and edify that people by her death, which she was not permitted, to the extent of her ambition, to benefit by her life.

Should her lamented and untimely end be the means of giving that religious impulse to the public mind, which shall turn us to righteousness, the benefits she will have conferred upon her country, in both worlds, will more than equal the glories of the most prosperous and extended reign.

A SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

REV. JOHN RYLAND, D.D.

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL,

JUNE 5, 1825.

A SERMON.

JOHN xxi. 7.

That disciple whom Jesus loved.

IT has been alleged by unbelievers, as a defect in the morality of the gospel, that it neglects to inculcate patriotism and friendship. In regard to the first of these, it seems a sufficient reply, that though an attachment to our country as such, is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament, the duties which result from the relation in which christians stand to their rulers, are prescribed with great perspicuity, and enforced by very solemn sanctions; and if the reciprocal duties of princes and magistrates are not enjoined with equal explicitness, (as could not be expected in writings where they are not addressed), the design of their appointment is defined in such a manner, as leaves them at no loss to perceive what it is that they owe to the community. But where these duties are faithfully dicharged by each party, the benefits derived from the social compact are so justly appreciated, and so deeply felt, that the love of country is less liable to defect than to excess. In all well-ordered polities, if we may judge from the experience of past ages, the attachment of men to their country is in danger of becoming an absorbing principle, inducing not merely a forgetfulness of private interest, but of the immutable claims of humanity and justice. In the most virtuous times of the Roman republic, their country was the idol, at whose shrine her greatest patriots were at all times

prepared to offer whole hecatombs of human victims: the interests of other nations were no further regarded than as they could be rendered subservient to the gratification of her ambition; and mankind at large were considered as possessing no rights, but such as might with the utmost propriety be merged in that devouring vortex. With all their talents and their grandeur they were unprincipled oppressors, leagued in a determined conspiracy against the liberty and independence of mankind. In the eyes of an enlightened philanthropist, patriotism, pampered to such an excess, loses the name of virtue; it is the bond and cement of a guilty confederation. It was worthy of the wisdom of our great legislator to decline the express inculcation of a principle so liable to degenerate into excess, and to content himself with prescribing the virtues which are sure to develope it, as far as is consistent with the dictates of universal benevolence.

The second part of the objection to which we have alluded is susceptible of a similar answer. Let it be admitted, that our Lord did not formally prescribe the cultivation of friendship;—and what then? He prescribed the virtues out of which it will naturally grow; he prescribed the cultivation of benevolence in all its diversified modes of operation. In his personal ministry, and in that of his apostles, he enjoined humility, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, and the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript of these virtues. But these, in the ordinary course of events, and under the usual arrangements of Providence, are the best preparation for friendship, as well as the surest guarantee for the discharge of its duties, and the observation of its rights. For such is the secret affinity of mind to mind, such the social constitution of man, that he who is imbued with these dispositions can scarcely fail in the pilgrimage of life, to contract a friendship with one or more of his species. Accustomed to look upon the whole human family with a benign aspect, some members of it will attract more

of his attention, and awaken more of his complacency than others; where their virtues are equal, some more than ordinary congeniality of taste and temper will form a basis of preference, a motive for predilection, which, confirmed by habit, and strengthened by the reciprocal exchange of gratifying attentions and kind offices, will at length ripen into friendship. A mind habitually tender easily melts into softness, and exchanges the sentiments of esteem for those of specific attachment and endearment. What is friendship in virtuous minds but the concentration of benevolent emotions, heightened by respect and increased by exercise, on one or more objects? Friendship is not a state of feeling, whose elements are specifically different from those which compose every other. The emotions we feel towards a friend are the same in kind with those we experience on other occasions; but they are more complex and more exalted. It is the general sensibility to kind and social affections, more immediately directed to one or more individuals, and in consequence of its particular direction, giving birth to an order of feeling more vivid and intense than usual, which constitutes friendship. Hence we perceive the impropriety of making it the subject of legislation. It is the duty of every man to cultivate the dispositions which lead to friendship, the love of his species, admiration of virtue, regard to the feelings of others, gratitude, humility, along with the most inflexible adherence to probity and truth. Wherever these exist, friendship will be the natural result; but, it will result as a felicity rather than as a duty; and is to be placed among the rewards of virtue rather than its obligations. Happiness is not to be prescribed, but to be enjoyed; and such is the benevolent arrangement of Divine Providence, that wherever there is a moral preparation for it, it follows of course; and such are the pleasures and advantages derived from virtuous friendship. Its duties, supposing it to be formed, are deducible, with sufficient certainty and precision, from the light of nature and the precepts of scripture, and

none more sacred; but in the act of forming it, the mind disdains the fetters of prescriptions, and is left to be determined by the impulse of feeling, and the operation of events.

Besides, were friendship inculcated as a matter of indispensable obligation, endless embarrassments would arise in determining at what period the relation shall commence; whether with one or with more; and at what stage, in the progress of mutual attraction, at what point, the feelings of reciprocal regard shall be deemed to reach the maturity which entitles them to the sacred name of friendship. The laws of virtue and piety are coeval with our existence, considered as reasonable and accountable creatures. Their authority is founded on immutable relations, the duties resulting from which are capable of being clearly conceived and exactly defined; but he who should undertake to prescribe to the subtle and mysterious impulses which invite susceptible minds to friendship, would find himself engaged in an attempt as hopeless as to regulate the motions of the air which *bloweth where it listeth.*

But though the cultivation of friendship, for the reasons already assigned, is not made the subject of precept, but is left to grow up of itself under the general culture of reason and religion, it is one of the fairest productions of the human soil, the cordial of life, the lenitive of our sorrows, and the multiplier of our joys; the source equally of animation and of repose. He who is destitute of this blessing, amidst the great crowd and pressure of society, is doomed to solitude; and however surrounded with flatterers and admirers, however armed with power, and rich in the endowments of nature and of fortune, has no resting place. The most elevated station in life affords no exemption from those agitations and disquietudes which can only be laid to rest on the bosom of a friend.

The sympathies even of virtuous minds, when not warmed by the breath of friendship, are too faint and cold to satisfy the social cravings of our nature; their compassion is too much dissipated by the multiplicity of

its objects, and the varieties of distress, to suffer it to flow long in one channel; while the sentiments of congratulation are still more slight and superficial. A transient tear of pity, or a smile of complacency equally transient, is all we can usually bestow on the scenes of happiness or of misery which we meet with in the paths of life. But man naturally seeks for a closer union, a more permanent conjunction of interests, a more intense reciprocation of feeling; he finds the want of one or more with whom he can trust the secrets of his heart, and relieve himself by imparting the interior joys and sorrows with which every human breast is fraught. He seeks, in short, another self, a kindred spirit, whose interest in his welfare bears some proportion to his own, with whom he may lessen his cares by sympathy, and multiply his pleasures by participation.

The satisfaction derived from surveying the most beautiful scenes of nature, or the most exquisite productions of art, is so far from being complete, that it almost turns into uneasiness when there is none with whom we can share it; nor would the most passionate admirer of eloquence or poetry consent to witness their most stupendous exertions, upon the simple condition of not being permitted to reveal his emotions. So essential an ingredient in felicity is friendship, apart from the more solid and permanent advantages it procures, and when viewed in no other light than as the organ of communication, the channel of feeling and of thought. But if joy itself is a burden which the heart can ill sustain, without inviting others to partake of it, how much more the corrosions of anxiety, the perturbations of fear, and the dejection arising from sudden and overwhelming calamity!

But it is not merely as a source of pleasure, or as a relief from pain, that virtuous friendship is to be coveted; it is at least as much recommended by its utility. He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathizing friend, may be said to have doubled his mental resources: by associating an equal, perhaps a superior mind, with his own, he has provided the means of strengthening his reason, of perfecting his counsels, of

discerning and correcting his errors. He can have recourse at all times to the judgement and assistance of one, who with the same power of discernment with himself, comes to the decision of a question with a mind neither harassed with the perplexities, nor heated with the passions, which so frequently obscure the perception of our true interests. Next to the immediate guidance of God by his Spirit, the counsel and encouragement of virtuous and enlightened friends afford the most powerful aid, in the encounter of temptation and in the career of duty.

Wisdom indeed is not confined to any limited circle, much less to the very narrow one of private friendship, and sound advice may often be procured from those with whom we have contracted no ties of intimacy. But the patient attention required to comprehend and encounter all the peculiarities of the case; the persevering ardour, the persuasive sympathy, necessary to invest it with authority and to render it effectual, will be wanting; in the absence of which, the wisest counsel is a wintry and sickly beam, which plays on the surface only: it may enlighten, but will seldom penetrate or melt. The consciousness, too, of possessing a share in the esteem and affection of persons of distinguished worth is a powerful support to every virtuous resolution; it sheds a warm and cheerful light over the paths of life; fortifies the breast against unmanly dejection, and pusillanimous fears; while the apprehension of forfeiting these advantages, presents a strong resistance to the encroachments of temptation. There are higher considerations, it is true, which ought invariably to produce the same effect; but we have no such superfluity of strength, as should induce us to decline the aid of inferior motives, when all are but barely adequate to the exigencies of our state. The recollection that we are acting under the eye of Omniscience will lose nothing of its force by being joined to the remembrance, that our conduct is subject to the scrutiny of friends, whose sentiments are in unison, whose influence coincides with the voice of conscience and of God. And surely it must be no contemptible

aid in the discharge of his duties, which he derives, who has invited the benevolent inspection of his actions, the honest reprehension of his errors, and the warm encouragement of his virtues; who, accustomed to lay open the interior of his character, and the most retired secrets of his heart, finds, in the approbation of his friend, the suffrage of his conscience reflected and confirmed; who delighted, but not elated, by the esteem he has secured and the confidence he has won, advances with renovated vigour in the paths that lead to glory, honour, and immortality. The pleasures resulting from the mutual attachment of kindred spirits are by no means confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odours, though more faintly, through the seasons of absence; refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past, and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets, to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible.

Friendship, founded on the principles of worldly morality, recognized by virtuous heathens, such as that which subsisted between Atticus and Cicero, which the last of these illustrious men has rendered immortal, is fitted to survive through all the vicissitudes of life; but it belongs only to a union founded on religion, to continue through an endless duration. The former of these stood the shock of conflicting opinions, and of a revolution that shook the world; the latter is destined to survive when the heavens are no more, and to spring fresh from the ashes of the universe. The former possessed all the stability which is possible to sublunary things; the latter partakes of the eternity of God. Friendship founded on worldly principles is *natural*, and, though composed of the best elements of nature, is not exempt from its mutability and frailty; the latter is *spiritual*, and therefore unchanging and imperishable. The friendship which is founded on kindred tastes and congenial habits, apart from piety, is permitted by the benignity of

Providence to embellish a world which, with all its magnificence and beauty, will shortly pass away; that which has religion for its basis will ere long be transplanted in order to adorn the paradise of God.

But it is time to turn our attention to the passage selected for our present meditations: *that disciple whom Jesus loved.* This is not the only instance in which the writer of this history designates himself under that character; whence we may with certainty infer, that the preference shown him by our Lord, above the other apostles, was so notorious, that the mention of it, even by the person on whom it was bestowed, could occasion no offence. He had recourse to it, without doubt, from a dictate of modesty, that he might avoid the disagreeable necessity of often speaking of himself under his proper name. It is natural to feel some curiosity respecting the character of one who was the object of so distinguished a preference. Are we to impute it to a decided superiority in intellectual and moral attainments? Perhaps not. The consideration of moral worth will always enter deeply into the motives which actuate wise and good men in their choice of friends; but it is far from constituting the only one. A certain congeniality of mind and manners, aided by the operation of adventitious circumstances, contributes a principal share towards the formation of such unions; nor is it presumption to conjecture that, in the instance before us, there was something in the taste and disposition of our Lord, considered as a man, more in unison with those of John than with any of the other apostles. As every character has its peculiar mould, by which it is more or less distinguished, we may be allowed to suppose, that in addition to the possession of unrivalled excellence in general, that of our Lord was marked by certain discriminating features. The virtues of Elijah, which reappeared in John the Baptist,—stern, awful, and majestic,—fitted to alarm a slumbering world by a denunciation of the wrath to come: how different the aspect they wear, from those of *the man of sorrows*, who wept at the grave of Lazarus! We follow the footsteps of this greatest of

prophets with a reverence bordering upon terror; while we behold, in the character of our Lord, though transcendently superior, such a meek and softened majesty, that we are not surprised that he who knew him best, delighted to designate him under the appellation of *the Lamb.* The distinguishing features of our Lord's character, viewed as a perfect human being, were, unquestionably, humility and love; nor is it less certain, or less obvious, that these were the qualities most conspicuous in the character of the beloved disciple.

This apostle presents a striking contrast to a certain class of writers, who, by no means deficient in talent, but possessing little sensibility, afford the reader little or no insight into their character. Their conceptions and their language are cast into a certain artificial mould, which leaves scarcely any traces of individuality. The writings of John are of the most contrary description; they are replete with traits of character; the writer presents his heart in almost every page. A tender sensibility pervades his gospel, sufficient to distinguish it from either of the preceding; nor is it possible to believe, that the narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the last scenes of our Saviour's life, were composed without tears.

Such strokes of pathos, such touching simplicity, such minuteness of detail, without puerility or redundance, characterize the history of these extraordinary events, as could only have proceeded from one who felt himself a party concerned; who, with a most intimate acquaintance with his subject, wrote still more from his heart than from his head. He is little to be envied, who can peruse these inimitable narratives without being moved. The author places us in the very midst of the scenes he describes; we listen to the discourses, we imbibe the sentiments of the principal actors; and while he says nothing of himself, he lays open the whole interior of his character. We feel ourselves introduced, not so much to the acquaintance of an inspired apostle, as to that of the most amiable of men.

The selection of his materials is such as it were natural to expect from *the disciple whom Jesus loved;*

for, while the other evangelists direct their chief attention to the miracles of our Lord, John relates his sentiments and discourses. The preceding evangelists content themselves, for the most part, with exhibiting his human history, in the record of those facts which established the truth of his doctrine, and the divinity of his mission; John commences from an earlier date, draws back the veil of eternity, and shows us the subject of his history subsisting before all worlds, presiding in the work of creation and providence.

It is from this apostle we learn most fully the state of the controversy between our Lord and the unbelieving Jews; in the course of which, we have continual occasion to admire the quickness and dexterity, the subtlety and profundity, displayed in various discourses, which, but for him, would have been lost in oblivion. He expatiates with peculiar interest on the last interview between Christ and his disciples; where he assures them of his unalterable attachment, and exerts himself to console their grief, to reanimate their confidence, and dispel their fears, by the prospect of seeing them again, when their joy should be such as *no man should take from them.* He either entirely omits, or passes rapidly over, the transactions recorded by the other evangelists; but when he approaches the scene of the crucifixion, he lingers, and dwells upon the circumstances of that awful tragedy with a minuteness and particularity of detail, as though it had never been recorded before.

In the short epistles inscribed with his name, the topic on which he chiefly insists is LOVE, which, in its sublimer form, constitutes the moral essence of the Deity, as well as the very sum and substance of true religion. His heart was in perfect unison with his subject. Written, as is supposed, at a very advanced age, the spirit they breathe is that of a father inculcating on his children the cultivation of every virtue, and especially of mutual affection, with that neglect of order and arrangement, and those reiterations and overflowings of tender importunity, which are suited to such a character. Instead of assuming an air of superiority, in his first epistle he

suppresses his name; and in the two last, takes to himself a title common to every christian pastor. He is not satisfied with styling his converts children; he styles them little children. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols;* which reminds me of a beautiful anecdote related by Eusebius, that when he was too much oppressed with infirmity to permit him to exercise his public ministry any longer, he was accustomed to be carried into the church; and after stretching forth his feeble arms, and crying, *Little children, love one another*, to retire from the assembly. So deeply was he imbued with the seraphic love of the bosom on which he leaned, that it remained unimpaired, amidst the decays of nature, and the eclipse of intellect.

In the early part of his life, if we may judge from a single incident, from his proposing to call down fire from heaven to avenge the insult offered to our Lord, he possessed an impetuous and eager spirit, not always restrained by *the wisdom that is from above;* but in maturer years it appears to have subsided, and given place to none but benign affections. His meekness and tenderness, however, were never indulged at the expense of truth, his adherence to which was inviolable; nor did he fail to express the utmost abhorrence at any attempt to corrupt it; insomuch that I can easily believe another anecdote related by Eusebius, that, on his entering a public bath, and finding the notorious heresiarch Cerinthus there, he left it with precipitation, exclaiming, "Let us flee from this place, lest it fall and crush that enemy of God!" His benevolence spent itself, not in a hollow and unmeaning complaisance to the impugners of the gospel, but in efforts to convert them; and just in proportion as he loved his fellow-creatures, was his anxiety to preserve, unimpaired, and unmixed, the doctrine by which they were to be saved.

But enough has been said on the character of this eminent apostle. Before we dismiss this branch of our subject, it will be proper to advert to a few indications of the preference with which he was honoured. On perusing the evangelists, it appears, that he was in-

variably selected by our Lord as one of the three, who were present in the most retired scenes of his life, on the mount of transfiguration, in the house of Jairus, and in the garden of Gethsemane. Whoever else were absent, John was sure to share his most confidential moments, and to witness his most secret joys and conflicts. At the paschal supper, to which he looked forward with so much eagerness, as the appointed season for a more unreserved disclosure of his purposes than he had made before, he placed John next to himself, in such a manner, that his head naturally rested on his bosom. Through him it was that the rest of the disciples applied to our Lord to be informed who it was that should betray him. But the most decisive evidence of the preference bestowed upon John, arises from his being chosen to take care of his widowed mother after his decease. The circumstance is related with inimitable simplicity and beauty. No sooner was our Saviour elevated on the cross, than he sees his mother standing by, along with *the disciple whom he loved:* to the mother he said, *Behold thy son;* to John, *Behold thy mother: and from that moment John took her to his own house.* What a rebuke to that proud and false philosophy, which pretends to extinguish the feelings of nature, and to erect its trophies on the ruins of humanity! By committing to the beloved disciple so precious a deposit, he gave him a stronger demonstration of his esteem than by a whole volume of panegyric.

After the resurrection and ascension, he continued to receive from his Saviour similar proofs of his preference. Preserved amidst a violent and bloody persecution, he was permitted (such is the universal tradition of the church) to survive the rest of the apostles, to witness, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of its inhabitants, the fulfilment of his own predictions, and, finally, to close a life extended to an extreme old age in peace, and in the bosom of his friends. Nor was this the only distinction he enjoyed. To him it was given to convey to the churches of Asia among whom he dwelt, repeated messages from his ascended Lord, to behold his

glory, and to catch the last accents of inspiration. To him it was given, not only to record the life of the Saviour, in common with the other evangelists; but to transmit to future ages the principal events and vicissitudes which shall befall the church to the end of time, in a series of visions, which revived the spirit and manner, and more than equalled the sublimity, of the ancient prophets. Endowed with a genius equally simple and sublime, he mingles with ease among the worshippers before the throne, communes with beings of the highest order, and surveys the splendours of the celestial temple with an eye that never blenched. The place which he occupies in the order and succession of inspired men, must at the same time ensure to him a high distinction; for while Moses leads the way, John brings up the rear of that illustrious company.

To the selection of the passage to which your attention is directed, I was led by an irresistible impulse the moment I heard of the melancholy event which has deprived you of your beloved pastor. It appeared to me peculiarly applicable to his character, nor am I apprehensive of encountering contradiction, when I affirm, that among his numerous acquaintance, an entire unanimity will be felt on this subject. It will be readily confessed, that his piety was of the same mould and complexion with that which distinguished the beloved disciple. In the attempt I shall make to delineate his character, let me not be suspected of the presumption of attempting to impart any information to *you*, on whose minds his virtues have made that indelible impression which is far above the power of words. It is solely for the use of those who were placed beyond the influence of his example and the benefit of his instructions, that it appears to me not improper to exhibit some of the more conspicuous features which contributed to render him so eminent a pattern of christian excellence.

It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavour to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation

of men, it may still live in their memory and transmit through the shades of the sepulchre some reflection, however faint, of its living lustre. By enlarging the cloud of witnesses by which we are encompassed, it is calculated to give a fresh impulse to the desire of imitation; and even the despair of reaching it is not without its use, by checking the levity, and correcting the pride and presumption of the human heart.

Doctor Ryland was born January 29, 1753, at Warwick, where his venerable father exercised his ministry for some years; from whence he removed to Northampton.

The most remarkable particular recorded of his infancy is his early progress in the Hebrew language, which was such, that he read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible to the celebrated Hervey, when he was only five years old. About his thirteenth year, he became deeply impressed with religious concern; and without any thing very singular in his experience, his convictions ripened into genuine conversion, and he was baptized on a profession of his faith in his fourteenth year. At the request of the church he began to exercise his ministerial gifts in his seventeenth year; and after continuing to assist his father for some years, he was ordained co-pastor with him in the year 1781. In this situation he remained for some time; when, on his father's removal from Northampton, he became sole pastor, until the year 1793, when he received a unanimous invitation to the joint offices of president of the Bristol Education Society, and pastor of Broadmead. How he conducted himself in the first scene of his labours, many living witnesses can attest; suffice it to say, that his ministry during that period was eminently acceptable and useful. During his residence at Northampton, he was *in labours more abundant;* far from confining his ministry to a single spot, he diffused its benefits over a wide circle, preaching much in the surrounding villages; and though, on his removal to Bristol, his numerous avocations rendered his ministerial exertions less frequent, he may justly be

considered, on the whole, as one of the most laborious of pastors. He preached, during his whole career, not less than eight thousand six hundred and ninety-one sermons, and at two hundred and eighty-six distinct places.

If, as a preacher, he never attained the highest summit of popularity, he was always heard with attention. His ministry was replete with instruction, and not unfrequently accompanied with an unction which rendered it irresistible. As he possessed none of those graces of elocution and manner which secure superficial applause, he was always most esteemed by those who heard him the oftenest; and his stated hearers rarely, if ever, wished to exchange the voice of their pastor for that of a stranger. His address was such as produced an instantaneous conviction of his sincerity. It displayed, even to the most superficial observer, a mind infinitely above being actuated by the lust of applause; a spirit deeply imbued with a sense of eternal realities, and ready to pour itself forth as a libation on the sacrifice of the faith and obedience of his converts. The effect of his discourses, excellent as they were in themselves, was prodigiously heightened by the veneration universally felt for his character, and the just and high estimation entertained of his piety. Piety, indeed, was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably beyond the level of ordinary christians. Devotion appeared to be the principal element of his being: it was next to impossible to converse with him without perceiving how entirely it pervaded his mind, and imparted to his whole deportment an air of purity, innocence, and sanctity, difficult for words to express. His piety did not display itself in a profusion of religious discourse, nor in frequently alluding to the interior exercises of his mind on spiritual subjects. He was seldom known to speak of his religious joys or sorrows: his devotional feelings were too deep and too sacred to suffer themselves to evaporate in ordinary conversation. His religion appeared in its fruits; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence; in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil.

As little did his character partake of the ascetic. It never entered into his thoughts that religion was an enemy to the innocent pleasures and social endearments of human life, of which he entertained a high relish, and which his constant regard to the Deity rendered subservient to piety, by the gratitude which they inspired, and the conviction which they deepened of the divine benignity. His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity: it was an awful love, such as the beatific vision may be supposed to inspire, where the worshippers veil their faces in that presence in which they rejoice with ecstatic joy. As he cherished a firm persuasion that the attributes of the Deity ensure the production of the greatest possible sum of good, in comparison of which the quantity of natural and moral evil permitted to remain, vanishes and disappears, his views of the divine administration were a source of unmingled joy; while his profound sense of the essential holiness and justice of the Supreme Ruler, kept alive those sentiments of penitence and humility to which too many *optimists* are strangers. *He feared the great and terrible name of the Lord his God.*

Humility was, in fact, the most remarkable feature of his character. It was depicted on his countenance, his manners, his language; it pervaded almost every thing he said or did. He might most truly be said, in the language of scripture, to be *clothed* with it. The mode in which it operated was at the utmost remove from the shallow expedients adopted by those who vainly attempt to secure the praise of that quality, without possessing it. It neither prompted him to depreciate his talents, nor to disclaim his virtues; to speak in debasing terms of himself, nor to exaggerate his imperfections and failings. It taught him the rarer art of forgetting himself. His readiness to take the lowest place, could only be exceeded by the eagerness of all who knew him to assign him the highest; and this was the only competition which the distinctions of life ever cost him. His modesty was such, that the praises he was most solicitous

to merit he blushed to receive; and never appeared so disconcerted and embarrassed, as when he was necessitated to hear his own commendations. Hence it will be easily inferred, that he was completely exempt from the jealousy of superior talent or reputation; that it gave him not a moment's uneasiness to find himself eclipsed, and that he was the ardent admirer and panegyrist of the mental endowments in which he was most deficient. Though he had neglected to cultivate the powers of his imagination, and was little distinguished for the graces of style, no one was ever more disposed to admire them wherever they were conspicuous. The candour and benignity of his mind prepared him to embrace every kind of intellectual superiority, to rejoice in every display of talent, devoted to the interest of religion; and to derive exquisite gratification from the operation of those qualities and powers to which he made the least pretensions. His enjoyment of intellectual repast was not impaired by the consciousness of not having contributed to furnish it: and his virtue was thus his own reward, by enabling him to reap the harvest, where he neither sowed the seed, nor prepared the soil.

If any man ever practised the gentleness of Jesus Christ, it was certainly our lamented friend. Possessed of a temper naturally quick and irritable, he had, by the aid of reason and religion, so far subdued that propensity, that it was rarely suffered to appear, and when it did, it was a momentary agitation which quickly subsided into kindness and benignity. His sensibility was exquisite. There were a numerous class of subjects to which he could rarely advert without tears. The bare recurrence to his mind of the great objects of religion, was sufficient to produce a gush of tenderness; so entirely was his heart softened, that it might be truly styled *a heart of flesh*. Nor was his sensibility confined to religion. It pervaded the whole system of his life, producing a quick and powerful sympathy; not only with his own species, but with the whole circle of animated nature, the properties of which he took great delight in investigating, and in tracing the

exquisite contrivance of its benevolent Author for its preservation and enjoyment.

His extreme susceptibility of feeling, combined with his gentleness and timidity, necessarily exposed him to be wounded, whenever he encountered harsh and unfeeling manners; and from the same cause he was liable to be hurt by every symptom of unkindness, even where none was intended. His sensitive mind was impressed with every variety of temper in those with whom he conversed; and if his peace was less frequently invaded from this quarter than might have been expected, it is to be ascribed to that reverence which his character so universally inspired. It seemed a sort of sacrilege to trespass upon so much innocence and piety.

And here I cannot but remark, that, though religion in its ordinary mode of exhibition commands but little respect; when it rises to the sublime, and is perceived to tincture and pervade the whole character, it seldom fails to draw forth the homage of mankind. The most hardened impiety and daring profligacy will find it difficult to despise the man who manifestly appears to walk with God, whose whole system of life is evidently influenced and directed by the powers of the world to come. The ridicule cast on religious characters, is not always directed towards their religion, but more often, perhaps to the little it performs, contrasted with the loftiness of its pretensions; a ridicule which derives its force from the very sublimity of the principles which the profession of piety assumes. It may be doubted whether the character of Dr. Ryland provoked, on any occasion, the sneer of the infidel, or the scorn of the ungodly.

The opportunities of making great sacrifices for the good of mankind, are of rare occurrence, and he who remains inactive till it is in his power to confer signal benefits, or yield important services, is in imminent danger of incurring the doom of the slothful servant. It is the preference of duty to inclination, in the ordinary course of life, it is the practice of self-denial in a thousand little instances, which forms the truest test of character, and secures the honour and the reward of those who *live not to themselves*. Viewed in this light, our lamented friend presented a pattern of christian virtue, rarely, if ever, surpassed. His whole life was a series of acts of self-denial; his conduct appeared invariably to proceed from the impulse of benevolence and the sense of duty; and though not exempt from the errors and imperfections incident to the present state, his *eye was always single*, his intentions always upright. If the essence of christian perfection consists in a sole and supreme desire to do the will of God, he probably made as near an approach to it as is attainable in the present state; though he not only never pretended to it, but held all such pretensions in abhorrence.

Justice to his memory will not permit me to suppress the mention of that strict and inviolable regard to truth which he preserved in all his words and actions. He would never allow himself to employ those exaggerations and colours in the narration of facts, which many who would shudder at a deliberate falsehood freely indulge; some for the gratification of their passions, or the advancement of their interests, and others purely from the impulse of vanity, and a wish to render their narratives more striking, and their conversation more poignant. Whatever Dr. Ryland affirmed was, as far as his knowledge extended, as certain as an identical proposition; nor was he satisfied with the substantial truth of what he asserted; he was so anxious that the impression he conveyed should exactly coincide, as well in its degree, as in kind, with his internal conviction, that, if it be possible, he was too tenacious of truth, and may be said to have carried his scrupulosity too far. I have often been amused at observing the compass he would fetch, and the circumlocutions he would have recourse to, in the narration of facts, rather than incur the possibility of misrepresentation or mistake.

Few men have exhibited more unequivocal proofs of candour than your excellent and lamented pastor. Though a Calvinist, in the strictest sense of the word, and attached to its peculiarities in a higher degree than

most of the advocates of that system, he extended his affection to all who bore the image of Christ, and was ingenious in discovering reasons for thinking well of many who widely dissented from his religious views. No man was more remarkable for combining a zealous attachment to his own principles with the utmost liberality of mind towards those who differed from him; an abhorrence of error, with the kindest feelings towards the erroneous. He detested the spirit of monopoly in religion, and opposed every tendency to circumscribe it by the limits of party. His treatise on Baptism furnishes a beautiful specimen of the manner in which religious controversy should be conducted on a subject on which the combatants on both sides have frequently disgraced themselves by an acrimony and bitterness, in an inverse proportion to the importance of the point in debate. How extraordinary is it, that they who differ only on one subject, and that, confessedly of secondary moment, should have contended with more fierceness than has usually been displayed in a contest *pro aris et focis*, for all that is dear and important in christianity! Is it that their near approach as religious denominations, exposes them more to the spirit of rivalry, as adjoining kingdoms are the most hostile to each other, or that it is the property of bigotry to acquire an additional degree of malignity by being concentrated on one point, and directed to one object? Whatever the cause may be, the fact is singular and greatly to be lamented. He whose removal from us we so deeply regret, was too thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, to expose him to that snare; his love of good men of every nation, sect, and party, was fervent and disinterested, nor was it confined to the bounds of his personal knowledge; it engaged him in a most affectionate and extensive correspondence with eminent persons in remote quarters of the globe, whose faces he never saw; so signally was he prepared for sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, where the whole assembly of the church of the first-born will be convened before the throne of God and the Lamb

In addition to his other excellencies, none, who were honoured with his intimacy, will fail to recollect his diligence in the improvement of time, of the value of which he entertained too deep a sense, to allow any part of it to run to waste. By the practice of early rising, and a most exact distribution of his hours to their respective employments, he contrived to husband a treasure, which no one is permitted to squander without severely repenting it, though that repentance may possibly arrive too late. Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he *worked out his salvation with fear and trembling*. From taste, as well as from principle, he was warmly attached to order and method, which he extended to the minutest particulars. Thus the transactions of his whole life lay before him, by looking back on the turns and vicissitudes of which, he was accumulating fresh materials for gratitude, and acquiring new lessons of prudence and piety.

That with all this varied excellence he united some imperfections, will be readily allowed; at the same time it is but justice to remark, that they were in the strictest sense of the word *imperfections*, since they grew out of his natural temperament, and were not to be imputed to an obliquity of will, or to a deficiency in the strength of his moral principle. The most conspicuous of these was a certain timidity of spirit, a proneness to augur danger where none existed, which, from an excessive apprehension of doing evil, sometimes arrested his power of doing good. His caution was extreme, and his natural aversion to bold and hazardous measures, on some occasions, enervated his resolutions, and crippled his efforts. Alive to the possible inconvenience resulting from an unnecessary disclosure of his views, he narrowed his confidence too much, lost the advantage of that assistance and cooperation which he might easily have commanded, and in some of the most trying exigencies of his life, doomed himself to walk alone. It must be also acknowledged by his warmest admirers, that he was deficient in the spirit of authority, that he wanted the

power of asserting his rights, of repressing the encroachments of petulance, and of sustaining his pretensions to rule. The extreme gentleness of his character was such that it left him too much to the mercy of those who were conscious they might abuse it, without danger of incurring his resentment. He not only carried with him no *offensive*, but he had no *defensive*, armour. This want of force and energy of character, which was his chief imperfection, was not, there is reason to believe, entirely natural, but to be ascribed, in a great measure, to an injudicious mode of treatment in early life, and to some severe trials in the commencement of his career, which pressed with such force on his mind, that it never entirely recovered its elasticity. He witnessed in his excellent father an excess of vehemence, a careless intrepidity of temper, that, with the most upright intentions, involved him in so much distress, that his anxiety to avoid that extreme betrayed him into a contrary one. The grand maxim which he seems to have adopted for the regulation of his life, was a determination to shun every approach to what he had seen productive of so much inconvenience, forgetting, perhaps, too much, that the opposite to that which is wrong, is not always right. Hence the fear of consequences predominated too much in his course of action, and he was more easily deterred by the apprehension of possible evil, than incited to action by the prospect of good. In the words of an ingenious writer, employed on a different occasion "*there was nothing he needed to be cautioned against, so much as caution itself.*"*

I am aware there are those who have charged our excellent friend with a want of openness of character. As far as such an imputation has any colour of truth, it is but just to remark, that the deficiency complained of was in no degree tinctured with dissimulation or cunning. It was partly the effect of that timidity which he was acknowledged to possess, partly of that gentleness which shrunk with an instinctive recoil from contention, and

* See Morris's "Life of Fuller," a work which contains a most able and accurate delineation of the character of that extraordinary man.

which disposed him, however his feelings might be wounded, to breathe out his complaints in the ear of friendship, rather than demand such an explanation or apology as might have restored confidence, and prevented a repetition of the offence. He repressed his anger, but indulged his grief; and was accustomed on such occasions to conduct himself rather like a person wounded than offended. Thus the uneasy sensations, with which his mind was fraught were allowed to accumulate, producing not malignity indeed or rancour, of which he was incapable, but permanent disgust. *Be ye angry*, saith the Scripture, *and sin not.* A violent suppression of the natural feelings is not the best expedient for obviating their injurious effects, and though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotions of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive, is, perhaps, best evaporated by its natural and temperate expression; not to say that it is a wise provision in the economy of nature for the repression of injury, and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society.

Such, and such only, as it appears to me, was the origin of that reserve, which forms the most plausible objection to his character, and which, when closely investigated, will be considered more as an infelicity than a fault. That it contributed to render him less influential, less powerful, and totally disqualified him to be the head of a party, will be readily admitted, but it may be doubted whether it rendered him much less amiable. The worst effect of it was, that it sometimes imparted to his conduct the semblance of disingenuous concealment, while he was in reality an example of artless simplicity. For the liberty I have assumed of alluding to the imperfections of our lamented friend, my only apology is, that unqualified praise is entitled to little credit, and that the failings which attach to the character of the best of men are often as instructive as their virtues.

It may be expected that something should be said of his literary character and attainments, a circumstance not to be neglected, in speaking of the president of a theo-

logical institute. My knowledge, however, on this head, is too limited to allow me to say more, than that he was a scholar from his infancy, that his attainments in the Hebrew language were profound, that he had a general acquaintance with the principles of science, and that his reading was various and extensive. As he was extremely addicted to study and meditation, so his mental opulence was much greater than his modesty would permit him to reveal; his disposition to conceal his attainments being nearly as strong as that of some men to display them.

He had a passion for natural history, in the pursuit of which he was much assisted by the peculiar structure of his eyes, which were a kind of natural microscopes. The observations he made on various natural productions, without the aid of instruments, were really surprising; and though the peculiarity in his visual organs deprived him of the pleasure of contemplating the sublime and magnificent features of nature, it gave him a singular advantage for tracing her minuter operations.

But the science in which he most delighted, and to which he bent the full force of his mind, was theology: not that theology which is built on human speculation, and supported by scholastic subtleties, but that knowlege of God, and of the mysteries of his will, which shone in the face of Jesus Christ. By the incessant study of the Scriptures, your pastor became a *scribe well instructed for the kingdom of God, and, like a wise householder, was enabled to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old.* The system of divinity to which he adhered was moderate Calvinism, as modelled and explained by that prodigy of metaphysical acumen, the celebrated Jonathan Edwards. For the writings of this great man, and those of his followers, he formed a warm predilection very early, which continued ever after to exert a powerful influence on his public ministry, as well as his theological inquiries and pursuits. It inspired him with the most elevated conceptions of the moral character of the Deity, to the display of which it taught him to refer the whole economy of providence and of grace, while he inculcated the indispensable duty of

loving God, not merely for the benefits he bestows, but for what he is in himself, as essential to true religion. Hence, he held in abhorrence those pretended religious affections which have their origin and termination in *self*. Whether he attached an undue importance to these speculations, and rendered them occasionally too prominent in his public ministrations, it is not for me to determine; it is certain that they effectually secured him from the slightest tendency to Antinomianism, and contributed not a little to give purity and elevation to his religious views. The two extremes against which you are well aware he was most solicitous to guard the religious public, were, Pelagian pride, and Antinomian licentiousness; the first of which he detested as an insult on the grace of the gospel; the last, on the majesty and authority of the law.

By the removal of a minister of Christ, so able, so disinterested, so devoted, you have sustained a loss, the magnitude of which it is difficult to appreciate, much more to repair. A successor you may easily procure, but where will you find one who will so *naturally care for your state?* who, *instant in season and out of season, is willing to impart to you not only the gospel, but his own soul also, because ye are dear unto him?* You may hear the same truths from other lips, supported by illustrations and arguments equally clear and cogent; the same duties inculcated by similar motives; but where will you find them enforced and recommended by an example equally elevated, an affection equally tender? Where will you look for another, whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine, and who can invite you to no heights of piety but what you are conscious he has himself attained? When you add to this the effect of a residence among you of above thirty years, during which he became the confidential friend of your parents, the guide of your youth, and after witnessing the removal of one generation to a better world, was the honoured instrument of raising up another in their room; when you reflect on the continued emanations of wisdom and piety which proceeded for so long a space from this burning

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and shining light, you must be convinced that your loss is irreparable.*

The removal of such a pastor, of one whose labours you have so long enjoyed, is an epoch in the history of a church. It is an event which no living generation can witness more than once; and it surely calls upon you to consider what improvement you have made of such advantages, and what is the prospect that awaits you, in the final day of account, when you and your pastor shall meet once more in the presence of the Judge; he to give an account of his ministry, you of its effect on your character. In relation to him, the event is not doubtful. *He has finished his course, he has kept the faith; henceforth there remains for him a crown of righteousness, which Christ the righteous judge will give him on that day.* Would to God the issue were equally certain and equally happy on the part of those, who so long enjoyed the benefit of such a ministry! That such will be the issue with respect to many who compose this auditory, we cannot doubt; and with what inconceivable joy will he witness the felicity which awaits them, while he presents them before the throne, saying, *Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me!* With what delight will they renew the intercourse which death had interrupted, and retrace together the steps of their mysterious pilgrimage! while the gratitude they will experience towards him who was instrumental in conducting them thither, will be only inferior to that which they will feel to God and the Lamb. How trivial will every other distinction then appear, compared to the honour of having turned many to righteousness! of having sown that seed which shall be reaped in life everlasting! A large portion of this felicity will, we cannot doubt, accrue to your pastor, from those who are accustomed to assemble within these walls; but should it in any instance be otherwise, should the event be of a

* The church wisely sought for a successor to their excellent pastor in the author of this discourse, who removed from Leicester to Bristol in the spring of 1826; but whose admirable labours there were terminated by death within five years.—Ed.

contrary nature, he *will be a sweet smelling savour to God*, even *in them that perish.* His happiness will be unimpaired, his reward undiminished, and the feelings with which he was wont to contemplate such a catastrophe will give place to sentiments of a higher order. The tears which he here wept over souls in danger of perishing will be shed no more; all his agitation and anxiety, on their account, will be laid to rest; nor will they who refused to constitute his joy by their conversion, be suffered to mar his felicity by their destruction.

It is not the church and congregation only, over which he presided with so much honour, that feels itself interested in this event. The sensation which it has produced is widely extended, and has reached every part of this great and populous city; a city sufficiently enlightened to comprehend his worth, and to mourn his loss. When a Reynolds, whose munificence flowed in a thousand channels, and whose example gave a new impulse to the public mind, quitted the scene which he had so long adorned with his presence, and enriched with his bounty, that a general sensation should be excited, is no more than might be expected. But that the removal of a christian minister, who possessed none of these advantages, should produce a regret so universal and so deep, is a pleasing homage to the majesty of religion; a practical demonstration of the power it exerts over the consciences of men. If blessings are bestowed and judgements averted in answer to prayer, as the Scripture every where teaches, and the efficacy of prayer is proportioned to the fervour of faith and the perfection of obedience, it is impossible to say how much the inhabitants of this place may be indebted to our excellent friend, by whose removal they have lost a powerful intercessor with God!

By an extensive circle of ministers and churches, who shared his friendship, and on various occasions enjoyed his labours, his loss will be deeply lamented, and not without reason; for, though the faithful dispensers of evangelical instruction may now be reckoned by thousands, how few are left who can sustain a comparison

with him, in all the qualities which adorn the gospel, and give the possessor power with God.

That denomination of Christians, of which he was so long a distinguished ornament, will especially lay this providence to heart. Our hands are weakened this day; and if the glory is not departed from us, it is at least eclipsed and obscured. We have been visited with stroke upon stroke. Our brightest lights have been successively extinguished; and in vain do we look around for a Beddome, a Booth, a Fuller, or a Ryland; names which would have given lustre to any denomination, and were long the glory of ours. Your pastor was endeared to us, as one of the last links of the chain which connected the present generation with the founders of the Baptist Mission. From the very beginning, he mingled his counsels and his prayers with that determined band, who, in the absence of all human resources, resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe; nor did he cease to his last hour to watch over its progress with parental solicitude. The intimate friendship which subsisted between that lovely triumvirate, Fuller, Ryland, and Sutcliff, which never suffered a moment's interruption or abatement, was cemented by their common attachment to that object. Of congenial sentiments and taste, though of very different temperament and character, there was scarce a thought which they did not communicate to each other, while they united all their energies in supporting the same cause; nor is it easy to determine whether the success of our mission is most to be ascribed to the vigour of Fuller, the prudence of Sutcliff, or the piety of Ryland. Is it presumption to suppose, they still turn their attention to that object? that they bend their eyes on the plains of Hindostan, and sympathize with the toils of Carey and of his associates, content to postpone the pleasure which awaits them on his arrival, while they behold the steady though gradual progress of light, and see, at no great distance, the idol temples fallen, the vedas and shasters consigned to oblivion, the cruel rites of a degrading superstition abhorred and abandoned, and *the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ?*

But by none will the removal of our excellent friend be more deeply felt than by our missionaries in India, and especially by the venerable Carey, whom he was the means of introducing into the ministry; a circumstance which he sometimes mentioned with honest triumph, after witnessing the career of that extraordinary man, who, from the lowest poverty and obscurity, without assistance, rose by dint of unrelenting industry to the highest honours of literature, became one of the first of orientalists, the first of missionaries, and the instrument of diffusing more religious knowledge among his contemporaries, than has fallen to the lot of any individual since the Reformation; a man who unites, with the most profound and varied attainments, the fervour of an evangelist, the piety of a saint, and the simplicity of a child. His chief consolation on receiving the melancholy tidings, will undoubtedly arise from the prospect of soon meeting in a better world, where those who have been fellow-pilgrims in this vale of tears will be associated in the presence of the Saviour, never more to part.

If the mere conception of the reunion of good men, in a future state, infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully; if an airy speculation, for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions, could inspire him with such delight, what may we be expected to feel, who are assured of such an event by *the true sayings of God!* How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth, of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, "with every tear wiped from their eyes," standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, *in white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God, that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!* What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of

combat, and the labour of the way, and to approach not the house, but the throne of God, in company, in order to join in the symphony of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amidst the splendours and fruitions of the beatific vision!

To that state all the pious on earth are tending; and if there is a law from whose operation none are exempt, which irresistibly conveys their bodies to darkness and to dust, there is another, not less certain or less powerful, which conducts their spirits to the abodes of bliss, to the bosom of their Father and their God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward; every thing presses on towards eternity; from the birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence; while every thing which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the world, to adorn that eternal city *which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Let us obey the voice that calls us thither; let us *seek the things that are above*, and no longer cleave to a world which must shortly perish, and which we must shortly quit, while we neglect to prepare for that in which we are invited to dwell for ever. Let us follow in the track of those holy men, who, together with your beloved and faithful pastor, have taught us by their voice, and encouraged us by their example, *that, laying aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets us, we may run with patience the race that is set before us.* While every thing within us and around us reminds us of the approach of death, and concurs to teach us that this is not our rest, let us hasten our preparations for another world, and earnestly implore that grace, which alone can put an end to that fatal war which our desires

have too long waged with our destiny. When these move in the same direction, and that which the will of heaven renders unavoidable shall become our choice, all things will be ours; life will be divested of its vanity, and death disarmed of its terrors. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness.*

ON THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE INNOCENT FOR THE GUILTY.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

LUTON, BEDFORDSHIRE,

APRIL 3, 1822.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

About seven years ago I went down to Leicester, at Mr. Hall's especial request, for the purpose of advising with him as to the preparation of a volume of Sermons, an undertaking to which he had then made up his mind. After various conversations, we fixed upon twelve, the subjects of which, with their respective modes of discussion and application, he regarded himself as able to recall without much difficulty. Among the sermons then selected was the following, composed in confirmation of a momentous point of christian doctrine, and which he had preached at Luton, in the spring of 1822. He spoke of it as most readily occurring to his mind in its entire arrangement, and I therefore urged him to commit it to paper as soon as possible. This, there is reason to believe, he accomplished accordingly. But the continued indifferent state of his health, the numerous interruptions to which he was then exposed, and his total inability to satisfy himself in composing for the press, jointly concurred in detering him from advancing any farther towards the completion of his design, than to carry this sermon to its close, and to prepare the notes of *a few* others more fully than had been usual with him in his sketches for the pulpit.

The manuscript copy of this discourse, in Mr. Hall's own hand-writing, has been found since his death: not complete, it is true; but there are only two chasms of importance, and these I have been enabled to fill up by means of the reports of the same sermon which I have received from various friends. Although, therefore, I cannot but regret that the portions alluded to are not given precisely in Mr. Hall's language; yet, I trust, that nothing essential to the train of argument, or to its principal illustrations, is omitted.

June, 1831.

A SERMON.

Isaiah liii. 8.

For the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Isaiah has been usually styled the evangelical prophet; and, had no other part of his preaching descended to us except the portion before us, it would have sufficiently vindicated the propriety of that appellation. The sufferings of the Messiah are so affectingly portrayed, and their purpose and design so clearly and precisely stated, that we seem to be perusing the writings of an apostle rather than the predictions of a prophet: the obscurity of an ancient oracle brightens into the effulgence of gospel light. In no part of the New Testament is the doctrine of the atonement more unequivocally asserted, and the vicarious nature of our Lord's passion more forcibly inculcated, than in the context of the words selected as the basis of the present discourse.

It may not be improper to premise, that there is reason to believe that the original text has, in this instance, undergone some alteration, and that it anciently stood thus, *he was smitten unto death.* It was thus written by Origen, who assures us that a certain Jew, with whom he disputed, seemed to feel himself more pressed by this expression than by any other part of the chapter. It is thus rendered by the Septuagint in our present copies; and if, in this instance, it had not concurred with the original, neither could Origen* have

* See Orig. cont. Cels. lib. i. c.44, and Kennicott's Observations, quoted by Bishop Lowth, in his Notes on Isaiah liii.—Ed.

urged it with good faith, nor the Jew have felt himself embarrassed by the argument which it suggested.

The Jews pretend that no single person is designed in this portion of prophecy; but that the people of Israel collectively are denoted under the figure of one man, and that the purport of the chapter is a delineation of the calamities and sufferings which that nation should undergo, with a view to its correction and amendment. The absurdity of this evasion will be obvious to him who considers that the person who is represented as *stricken* is carefully distinguished by the prophet, from the people for whose benefit he suffered; *for the transgression of my people was he stricken:* in addition to which, he is affirmed to be stricken *even to death*, which, as Origen very properly urged, agrees well with the fate of an individual, but not with that of a people.

In spite of the vain tergiversation of the Jews, and the sophistry, equally impotent, of some who bear the christian name, this portion of ancient writ will remain an imperishable monument of *the faith once delivered to the saints*, of the harmony subsisting between the Old and the New Testament in relation to the scheme of mediation, and the basis of hope.

That the sufferings of the Redeemer were vicarious and piacular, that he appeared in the character of a substitute for sinners, in distinction from a mere example, teacher, or martyr, is so unquestionably the doctrine of the inspired writers, that to deny it, is not so properly to mistake, as to contradict, their testimony; it must be ascribed, not to any obscurity in revelation itself, but to a want of submission to its authority.

The doctrine in question is so often asserted in the clearest terms, and tacitly assumed as a fundamental principle in so many more; it is intermingled so closely with all the statements of truth, and inculcations of duty throughout the Holy Scriptures, that to endeavour to exclude it from revelation is as hopeless an attempt as to separate colour from the rainbow, or extension from matter.

It is no part of the purpose of this discourse to

enter into the proof of the substitution of Christ in the place of sinners, as the defence of that doctrine will frequently engage the attention of every christian minister.

In addressing those who are thoroughly confirmed in this belief, we may be allowed to proceed on the assumption of its truth, while we endeavour, in dependence on divine assistance, to illustrate the fitness of the scheme of *substitution*, and the indications which it affords of profound and unsearchable wisdom. Difficult as this subject must be allowed to be, I trust an attempt to discuss it, however feeble, is not exposed to the charge of presumption. It is one thing to presume to anticipate the counsels of Heaven, and another, after they are accomplished and exhibited as facts, humbly to explain the wisdom with which they are fraught. To have anticipated the scheme of redemption, by previously perceiving that it was, of all possible plans, the fittest to be adopted by a Being of infinite wisdom, was a task to which, it is probable, no finite intellect was adequate; but to perceive some of its congruities, when it is actually laid before us, may demand nothing . . . .

* * * * * *

[*Here there is a chasm in the manuscript: but from the notes of this sermon with which the Editor has been supplied, it may be filled, as to substance, thus:—*]

To perceive some of its congruities, may require but an ordinary degree of talent and discrimination, with an upright desire to learn what revelation teaches; and is altogether distinct from attempting to be *wise above what is written*.

In endeavouring to show the circumstances which render this extraordinary method of proceeding consistent with the character of God, we only pursue the guidance of the Sacred Writings, and find new motives for gratitude to our Heavenly Father for his unspeakable goodness.

Yet every reflecting person must perceive that there is in this doctrine something extremely remote from ordinary apprehension, apart from the instruction derived from Holy Writ. That one of the human race, by submitting to an ignominious and painful death, should be the moral source of the salvation of an innumerable multitude of mankind, and, if duly improved, a sufficient source for the salvation of all, is surely one of the most extraordinary of the divine proceedings with regard to man. Nothing like this has ever existed. It seems to stand by itself, an insulated department of Divine Providence, to contain within itself a method of acting which was never seen before, and will never be repeated.

Among men, the substitution of a righteous for a guilty person could rarely occur. There is seldom found sufficient heroism or virtue to induce an individual so to offer himself; such a combination of benevolence, and of generous oblivion of self-interest, as to induce such a sacrifice.

Nor would it be fit, in ordinary cases, that it should be admitted: it would be too great an expenditure of the most valuable and costly elements of society; besides that it would be contrary to all moral economy, to admit the violation of law to be pardoned at the expense of such as are its ornaments and blessings. No wise government would permit, to any considerable extent, a proceeding which would tend to continue in existence those who inflict misery on mankind, at the expense of those who are its blessings.

Besides, if this practice were common, even upon the supposition that no crime should pass without being followed by punishment as a necessary result, yet such would be the uncertainty, after crime had been committed, as to who should bear the punishment, as would tend to take away all fear of committing offences. The best provision of wise legislation, which is to prevent crime, not to punish, would thus be removed. It would become a kind of lottery who should suffer, and thus the dread of punishment would be greatly impaired, if not entirely destroyed.

It is evident, therefore, that, so far from this being a human device, it could never have been *thought of* as an ordinary mode of procedure. And though there are some traces in history of persons supposed to have presented themselves, as vicarious offerings for relatives or connexions, yet they are feebly attested: while, among the well attested records of judicial authority, we have *no* instance, probably, of any person who was himself innocent and upright being *admitted* as a substitute in behalf of the guilty. Yet that this is the way in which the Infinite Mind has proceeded in laying the foundation of human acceptance, none can doubt but those who are disposed to torture the plainest expressions.

Let us, therefore, consider, what circumstances met in this case, and must be supposed to concur on any occasion of this kind, to render fit and proper the substitution of an innocent person in the place of the guilty; and what is peculiar in the character of our Saviour, which renders it worthy of God to set him apart as *a propitiation for the sins of the world*, and annex the blessings of eternal life to such as believe in the doctrine of the cross, and repent, and turn to God.

[☞ *We now return to the original copy.*]

First. It is obvious that such a procedure as we are now contemplating, in order to give it validity and effect, must be sanctioned by the supreme authority. It is a high exertion of the dispensing power, which can issue from no inferior source to that from which the laws themselves emanate.

For a private person, whatever might be his station in society, to pretend to introduce such a commutation of punishment as is implied in such a transaction, would be a presumptuous invasion of legislative rights, which no well-regulated society would tolerate. To attach the penalty to the person of the offender is as much the provision of the law as to denounce it—they are equally component parts of one and the same regulation; and the power of dispensing with the laws is equivalent to

Yet every reflecting person must perceive that there is in this doctrine something extremely remote from ordinary apprehension, apart from the instruction derived from Holy Writ. That one of the human race, by submitting to an ignominious and painful death, should be the moral source of the salvation of an innumerable multitude of mankind, and, if duly improved, a sufficient source for the salvation of all, is surely one of the most extraordinary of the divine proceedings with regard to man. Nothing like this has ever existed. It seems to stand by itself, an insulated department of Divine Providence, to contain within itself a method of acting which was never seen before, and will never be repeated.

Among men, the substitution of a righteous for a guilty person could rarely occur. There is seldom found sufficient heroism or virtue to induce an individual so to offer himself; such a combination of benevolence, and of generous oblivion of self-interest, as to induce such a sacrifice.

Nor would it be fit, in ordinary cases, that it should be admitted: it would be too great an expenditure of the most valuable and costly elements of society; besides that it would be contrary to all moral economy, to admit the violation of law to be pardoned at the expense of such as are its ornaments and blessings. No wise government would permit, to any considerable extent, a proceeding which would tend to continue in existence those who inflict misery on mankind, at the expense of those who are its blessings.

Besides, if this practice were common, even upon the supposition that no crime should pass without being followed by punishment as a necessary result, yet such would be the uncertainty, after crime had been committed, as to who should bear the punishment, as would tend to take away all fear of committing offences. The best provision of wise legislation, which is to prevent crime, not to punish, would thus be removed. It would become a kind of lottery who should suffer, and thus the dread of punishment would be greatly impaired, if not entirely destroyed.

It is evident, therefore, that, so far from this being a human device, it could never have been *thought of* as an ordinary mode of procedure. And though there are some traces in history of persons supposed to have presented themselves, as vicarious offerings for relatives or connexions, yet they are feebly attested: while, among the well attested records of judicial authority, we have *no* instance, probably, of any person who was himself innocent and upright being *admitted* as a substitute in behalf of the guilty. Yet that this is the way in which the Infinite Mind has proceeded in laying the foundation of human acceptance, none can doubt but those who are disposed to torture the plainest expressions.

Let us, therefore, consider, what circumstances met in this case, and must be supposed to concur on any occasion of this kind, to render fit and proper the substitution of an innocent person in the place of the guilty; and what is peculiar in the character of our Saviour, which renders it worthy of God to set him apart as *a propitiation for the sins of the world*, and annex the blessings of eternal life to such as believe in the doctrine of the cross, and repent, and turn to God.

[☞ *We now return to the original copy.*]

First. It is obvious that such a procedure as we are now contemplating, in order to give it validity and effect, must be sanctioned by the supreme authority. It is a high exertion of the dispensing power, which can issue from no inferior source to that from which the laws themselves emanate.

For a private person, whatever might be his station in society, to pretend to introduce such a commutation of punishment as is implied in such a transaction, would be a presumptuous invasion of legislative rights, which no well-regulated society would tolerate. To attach the penalty to the person of the offender is as much the provision of the law as to denounce it—they are equally component parts of one and the same regulation; and the power of dispensing with the laws is equivalent to

the power of legislation. Besides, so many circumstances, rarely, if ever combined, must concur to render such a procedure conducive to the ends of justice, that it would be the height of temerity to commit the determination of them to the exercise of private discretion instead of legislative wisdom.

This condition was most unequivocally satisfied in the mystery of Christ's substitution. When he undertook to *bear our sins in his own body on the tree*, he contracted no private engagement without the consent and approbation of his Heavenly Father. If he *gave himself for our sins, to redeem us from the present evil world*, it was *according to the will of God, even our Father*. On every occasion he reminds us, that he did nothing from himself, but that only which the Father had commissioned him to do. *I have power*, said he, *to lay down my life, and power to take it up again: this commandment received I of my Father. Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do; Arise, let us go hence. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.** These inspired statements place it beyond all doubt, that christianity originated with the Supreme Governor of the universe, that its gracious provisions are the accomplishment of his counsel, and that its principles, however much they surpass the discoveries of reason, are in perfect harmony with the genuine dictates of natural religion. The substitution of the Redeemer in the room of sinners, was the contrivance of the same wisdom.

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* See John x. 18, to John xiv. 31. 1 John iv. 9, 10—14.

[*A second chasm in Mr. Hall's manuscript, supplied in substance from the notes of others.*]

Secondly. Another indispensable circumstance in such a proceeding, is, that it should be perfectly voluntary on the part of the sufferer. Otherwise, it would be an act of the highest injustice; it would be the addition of one offence to another, and give a greater shock to all rightly-disposed minds, than the acquittal of the guilty without any atonement. Whenever such an offering has been spoken of as taking place, it is represented as originating with the innocent person himself.

Here there appears, at first sight, an insuperable difficulty in the way of human salvation. How could that be rendered which was, at once, due to sin and mankind at large? Where could one be found that would endure the penalty freely, which was incurred by a sinful world? This our Saviour did. He not only came by authority, but such was his infinite love, that he came voluntarily. He expressed the deepest interest in his undertaking. He announced the particulars of his suffering, how he must be delivered, spit upon, and put to death; and in his hour of suffering, nothing is plainer than that he gave himself up to it voluntarily, according to the settled purpose of his own mind.

No sacrifice should go unwillingly to the altar. It was, indeed, reckoned a bad omen when any one did so. None ever went so willingly as *he. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter*, and evinced a readiness to be offered up. *He endured the cross, despising the shame*, all for *the joy that was set before him;* that glorious reward, the eternal happiness of an innumerable multitude of intelligent creatures, who must have perished if he had not been *stricken to death* for them.

Thirdly. It is farther necessary that the substitute not only undertake voluntarily, but that he be perfectly free from the offence which renders punishment necessary. If he were tainted with that for which the punishment was assigned; nay, if he were only in part implicated in any other crime, he had already incurred some

penalty, and there must be a proportionate deduction for what was due on his part.

Accordingly, in the case of man, divine justice cannot be willing to acquiesce in a substitute who is a sharer in guilt; for the law has a previous hold upon him; there is a debt due on his own account.

But Jesus Christ, though a man, was, by reason of his miraculous conception, free from the taint of original sin. *That holy thing* which was born of the virgin grew up in a course of perfect purity and rectitude. He could say to his enemies, *Which of you convinceth me of sin? He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.* He, and he alone, of all who are of our nature, appeared in this character. By this means he became an immaculate sacrifice. He was shadowed forth by a pure lamb. *He was as a lamb without spot.* It was not this that rendered the sacrifice sufficient, but in this respect it accomplished all that could be expected of a human sacrifice. His Father rested in him, not only because he was his beloved Son, a partaker of his divine nature, but because he was holy and *such an one as became us;* not that we had a claim to such a priest, but no other could answer for us. The Levitical high-priests could *never, with those sacrifices which they offered continually, year by year, make the comers thereunto perfect; for each ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins;* and therefore he could only be an imperfect figure of the true high-priest, who offered not for himself, but offered himself for us.

Fourthly. There would be a great propriety in this also, that the innocent person substituted for the guilty, should stand in some relation to him.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was related to mankind; one like them whom he came to redeem. It was indispensable that he should stand in close connexion with them to whom his righteousness was to be transferred. This was shadowed forth, in the law of a Redeemer of a lost estate. The person who was to redeem must be related: hence a redeemer and a relation were expressed by one term, and the nearest relation was to redeem.

This was not merely a law suited to that state of society, but was intended to foreshow the congruity of the substitution of Christ. *Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.* Thus he became *like unto his brethren. He took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham,* the seed he came to redeem. As he came to sinful men, he took on him the *likeness of sinful flesh. He was made like unto us in all points, yet without sin.* The brazen serpent lifted up for the cure of the Israelites, was of the same form as the serpents by which they were wounded. By one man came sin and death, by one man came redemption. *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* Much more is adduced to the same effect by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, all tending to establish the truth, that as the first Adam was the cause of corruption, shame, and misery, so the second Adam is the source of holiness, life, and bliss.

Hence, then, the incarnation of our Lord was necessary. He was obliged to pass from one world to another, to take upon him a nature originally foreign from him. *I came forth from the Father,* saith he, *and am come into the world;* and justly will the love that prompted him to do so be the everlasting theme of all holy and happy beings. It is probable that if nothing else had rendered unsuitable the substitution of angels for men, this would have been sufficient, that on account of the essential difference between their nature and that of man, there would have been an incongruity in substituting their acts for ours. But Jesus Christ, by his incarnation, being of one flesh and of one spirit with us, was fitted to sustain the character of redeemer. He thus became indeed our kinsman, one in the same circumstances, under the same law, liable to the same temptations, subject to the same passions, encompassed about with our infirmities, but *sinless;* and thus suited every way to become a substitute for our guilty race.

[☞ *We again return to the original copy.*]

Thus much is certain, that as the wisdom of God saw it requisite that the redemption of guilty man should be effected by a sacrifice proportioned to the exigence of the case, the assumption of human nature followed as a natural consequence. The ancient sacrifices appointed by Moses, possessed not (it was impossible they should) any intrinsic validity; they exhibited not the expiation, but the remembrance of sin every year. This is the express declaration of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* By his assumption of human nature he stood (notwithstanding that original superiority which removed him at an infinite distance) to the race of man in the relation of a brother; for the flesh which he condescended to take of the blessed virgin, of whom he was miraculously conceived, connected him with our common progenitor. *For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one,* derived from one parent; *for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.*

Fifthly. If the substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty is at all permitted, it seems requisite that no advantage should be taken of a momentary enthusiasm, a sudden impulse of heroic feeling, which might prompt a generous mind to make a sacrifice, of which, on cool deliberation, he repented.

A proper space should be allowed for reviewing the resolution, for surveying it in all its consequences, and forming a settled and immoveable purpose. The self-devotion implied in such a transaction will acquire additional dignity in proportion as it appears the result, not of hurried and impetuous feeling, but of fixed determination and extended foresight; a resolution on which time has had no other effect than to fortify and confirm it.

How often is the pang of intense commiseration found to suggest the idea of sacrifices, which the calmer and more permanent dictates of self-interest consign to oblivion, and scatter to the wind! Perhaps there are few who have not been the subject of momentary feeling, the steady predominance of which would have made them heroes and martyrs, who yet shortly subside into their native selfishness, and before the season for action arrives, the genial current which warmed them for a moment is chilled and frozen.

In the case we are now contemplating, the admission of an innocent person to suffer instead of the guilty, nothing could reconcile the mind to such a procedure but such a settled purpose on the part of the substitute, as precludes the possibility of a vacillation or change. But this condition is found in the highest perfection on the part of the blessed Redeemer. His oblation of himself was not the execution of a sudden purpose, the fruit of a momentary movement of pity; it was the result of deliberate counsel, the accomplishment of an ancient purpose, formed in the remotest recesses of a past eternity. He was *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, when he set a compass upon the face of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he fixed the foundations of the earth: rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; his delights were with the sons of men.*

It is appointed indeed *for all men once to die.* With us it is an event inseparably attached to an abode on earth. But with the Redeemer it was not so properly an incident of his earthly existence as its principal end and

design. He assumed life for the purpose of laying it down; and all the purposes, great as they were, which were accomplished by his life, were in entire subordination to those which he contemplated as the certain consequences of his death. In the course of his sojourn here, he never permitted himself to lose sight of it for a moment. The final scene, with all its terrors, was familiar to his imagination, and endeared to his heart; from no indifference to suffering, real or affected, but from the prospect of *the joy that was set before him. I have a baptism to be baptized with*, he exclaimed, *and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* Instead of wishing to efface the remembrance of it by turning his attention to other objects, there was nothing which he appeared more solicitous to inculcate on the minds of his disciples than the certainty of his future sufferings. *Then took he unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. Then shall he be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be spitefully entreated and spit upon, and they shall scourge him and put him to death.* When Peter, shocked at these annunciations, presumed to expostulate with his divine Master, he met with the severest rebuke. *Get thee behind me, Satan*, said he, *for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* Until he had finished the work which was given him, he consulted his safety, often concealed himself, and avoided such an open display of his character and pretensions as might precipitate the designs of his enemies. But the moment the appointed time had arrived, we find him laying aside all reserve, courting the publicity which before he had shunned, and fearlessly, in the face of the sanhedrim, and even before the tribunal of Pilate, avowing himself *the Son of God*, though he well knew the effect would be to hasten his exit. While danger was at a distance, he was cautious and reserved; but the moment it arrived, he abandoned himself to it with a calm and fearless intrepidity.

Sixthly. In the case of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, it seems highly requisite that he who offers himself as the substitute, should justify the law by which he suffers. To say the least, the decorum of the transaction will be much heightened on the supposition, that he who sustains vicarious punishment, not only yields his entire consent, but proclaims, at the same time, his conviction of the equity and goodness of the legal enactment to which he falls a sacrifice. It were to be desired, though it can scarcely be hoped, that penal laws were so constructed as to impress a persuasion of their justice universally on those who have incurred their penalties. But in the case we are now considering, which is, that of an innocent person substituting himself in the place of the guilty, there is a peculiar reason for demanding his express approval of the equity of the original sentence. The enthusiastic admiration which such conduct would naturally excite, the reverence which such a display of unparalleled magnanimity would necessarily attach to its possessor, could not fail to add dignity to his character, and weight to his sentiments; and if, while he submitted to the penalty, he reprobated the severity of the law, the feelings of the spectators might be divided between esteem for the illustrious sufferer, and an aversion to the supposed rigour of the law. Thus the character of the sufferer would operate in a contrary direction to the punishment, and tend to defeat its salutary effects.

In the substitution of the Redeemer of mankind were conjoined the most prompt and voluntary endurance of the penalty, with the most avowed and cordial approbation of the justice of its sanctions. It was a great part of the business of his life, to assert and vindicate by his doctrine that law which he *magnified* and made illustrious by his passion.

Previous to his offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he was incessantly employed in rescuing the precepts of God from the false glosses by which they had been corrupted, in asserting their spirituality, exhibiting their extent, and sustaining their just authority, as the unalterable rule of action, and standard of duty.

Never had the law such an expounder as in the person of Him who came into the world to exhaust its penalties, and endure its curse. He condemned, with the greatest severity, every tenet or practice that went to weaken its obligations, or relax its strictness. To place it on the throne, to magnify and make it honourable, was not less the object of his ministry and of his life, than of his death. Thus, the sentiments of supreme devotion and attachment, to which he is entitled as the Saviour of the world, combine to strengthen our veneration for the law; nor can we pretend to any portion of the *mind of Christ*, but just in proportion to our practical regard to the law of God, as *holy, just, and good.* The more intimately our affections are united to Christ, the more, to speak in scripture language, *he dwells in our hearts by faith*, the more will the beauty of holiness attract the heart, and the deformity of sin be the object of our aversion. As the love of Christ is the master-principle in the christian system, so its operation must invariably coincide with the claims of divine authority; because it is the love of a personage who was distinguished from all others by a constant compliance with its dictates, and a most ardent devotion to its honour. *Think not that I am come to subvert the law or the prophets: I am come not to subvert, but to ratify. For, verily I say unto you, heaven and earth shall sooner perish than one iota or one tittle of the law shall perish without attaining its end.** In such terms as these did our Saviour assert the intrinsic excellence and unalterable perpetuity of the law of God; by which he has instructed us in the true nature of his sacrifice, which was designed not merely to appease wrath, but to satisfy justice; not merely to relieve misery, but to expiate guilt. It is of the utmost importance that it should be indelibly engraved on our minds, that Christ died not merely to rescue us from the ruin which we had incurred, but from the punishment which we had merited; since our gratitude for the provisions of mercy will be exactly

* Matt. v. 18. Dr. Campbell's version.

proportioned to the conviction we feel of the perfect equity of that sentence from which it exempts us. In this view we are unspeakably indebted to our great Deliverer for so zealously asserting the honours of that law which cost him so dear.

The penitent believer is now under no temptation to indulge depreciating thoughts of the immutable excellence and obligation of that rule of duty which he has so frequently and awfully violated.

Seventhly. That the voluntary substitution of an innocent person, in the stead of the guilty, may be capable of answering the ends of justice, nothing seems more necessary than that the substitute should be of equal consideration, at least, to the party in whose behalf he interposes. The interests sacrificed by the suffering party, should not be of less cost and value than those which are secured by such a procedure.

But the aggregate value of those interests must be supposed to be in some proportion to the rank and dignity of the party to which they belong. As a sacrifice to justice, the life of a peasant must, on this principle, be deemed a most inadequate substitute for that of a personage of the highest order. We should consider the requisitions of justice eluded, rather than satisfied, by such a commutation. It is on this ground that St. Paul declares it to be *impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins;* the intrinsic meanness of the brute creation being such, that a victim taken from thence could be of no consideration in the eyes of offended justice. They were qualified to exhibit, as he reminds us, *a remembrance of sin every year;* but are utterly unequal to the expiation of guilt.

In this view the redemption of the human race seemed to be hopeless; and their escape from merited destruction, on any principles connected with law and justice, absolutely impossible. For where could an adequate substitute be found? Where, among the descendants of Adam, partakers of flesh and blood, could *one* be selected of such preeminent dignity and worth, that *his* oblation of himself should be deemed a fit and proper

equivalent to the whole race of man? to say nothing of the impossibility of finding there a spotless victim (and no other could be accepted). Who is there that ever possessed that prodigious superiority in all the qualities which aggrandize their possessor to every other member of the human family, which shall entitle him to be the representative, either in action or in suffering, of the whole human race? In order to be capable of becoming a victim, he must be invested with a frail and mortal nature; but the possession of such a nature reduces him to that equality with his brethren, that joint participation of meanness and infirmity, which totally disqualifies him for becoming a substitute. Here a dilemma presents itself, from which there seems no possibility of escape. If man is left to encounter the judicial effects of his sentence, his ruin is sealed and certain. If he is to be redeemed by a substitute, that substitute must possess contradictory attributes, a combination of qualities not to be found within the compass of human nature. He must be frail and mortal, or he cannot die a sacrifice; he must possess ineffable dignity, or he cannot merit as a substitute.

Such were the apparently insurmountable difficulties which obstructed the salvation of man by any methods worthy of the divine character; such the darkness and perplexity which involved his prospects, that it is more than probable the highest created intelligence would not have been equal to the solution of the question, *How shall man be just with God?*

The *mystery hid from ages and generations*, the mystery of *Christ crucified*, dispels the obscurity, and presents, in the person of the Redeemer, all the qualifications which human conception can embody as contributing to the perfect character of a substitute. By his participation of flesh and blood, he becomes susceptible of suffering, and possesses within himself the materials of a sacrifice. By its personal union with the eternal Word, the sufferings sustained in a nature thus assumed, acquired an infinite value, so as to be justly deemed more than equivalent to the penalty originally denounced.

His assumption of the human nature made his oblation of himself *possible;* his possession of the divine rendered it efficient; and thus weakness and power, the imperfections incident to a frail and mortal creature, and the exemption from these, the attributes of time and those of eternity, the elements of being the most opposite, and deduced from opposite worlds, equally combined to give efficacy to his character as the Redeemer, and validity to his sacrifice. They constitute a person who has no counterpart in heaven or on earth, who may be most justly denominated "*Wonderful;*" composed of parts and features of which, (however they may subsist elsewhere in a state of separation,) the combination and union, nothing short of infinite wisdom could have conceived, or infinite power effected. The mysterious constitution of the *person* of Christ, the stupendous link which unites God and man, and heaven and earth; that mystic ladder, on which *the angels of God ascended and descended*, whose foot is on a level with the dust, and whose summit penetrates the inmost recesses of an unapproachable splendour, will be, we have reason to believe, through eternity, the object of profound contemplation and adoring wonder.

In ascribing the sufficiency and efficacy of the atonement made by our Saviour to the preeminent dignity of his person as the Son of God, we are justified by the direct testimony of scripture, which is wont to unite these together in such juxta-position, as plainly implies their intimate and inseparable relation to each other.

We have already seen that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews founds the insufficiency of the victims under the law to take away sin, on their inherent meanness, with which he contrasts the validity of the atonement made by Christ: a mode of reasoning, the force of which entirely depends on his superior dignity and worth. After asserting that the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, he adds, *Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are*

offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. Adverting to the acknowledged fact that the blood of bulls and of goats availed to the purifying of the flesh, in other words, to the removal of ceremonial pollutions, he adds, *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living and true God?*

All must acknowledge that the purification of the conscience from dead works, that is, the pardon of sin and peace with God, is an infinitely greater benefit than the removal of legal disabilities under the ceremonial law; but the apostle teaches us to expect from the sacrifice of Christ this incomparably greater benefit, with a much firmer assurance than that with which the pious Jew anticipated the less. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son,* St. John assures us, *cleanseth us from all sin.* If St. Peter has occasion to enforce the obligation of shunning the pollutions of the world, the argument he makes use of for that purpose is derived from the value of that blood which was shed for their redemption, in comparison to which all the treasures of the earth are consigned to contempt. *Forasmuch as ye know,* is his language, *ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

As the whole provision of a Saviour originated in the gracious purpose of God, it is with the utmost propriety that he is denominated his *gift;* the transcendent greatness of which is frequently brought forward as a demonstration of the ineffable extent of his love. *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* But since he was

given to be a propitiatory sacrifice, the same intrinsic dignity and excellence which heightened the value of the gift, must have contributed in an equal degree to ensure the validity and sufficiency of the sacrifice.

Though many have presumed to call in question, and even to deny the divinity of our Saviour, I am not aware that there are any who embrace that fundamental doctrine, who hesitate for a moment respecting the intrinsic validity of his sacrifice, or who entertain a doubt of the sufficiency of such a provision to satisfy the claims of justice and vindicate the honours of a broken law. There is something so stupendous in the voluntary humiliation and death of him who claims to be *the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,* that to convince us of the fact, the most powerful and unequivocal testimony is indispensably necessary; but to be convinced of the validity and sufficiency of such a sin-offering for all the purposes for which an offering can be made, to perceive it to be the most ample vindication of the moral attributes of God, in consistence with the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners, no effort is necessary whatever: such a persuasion insinuates itself with the greatest ease, and takes the firmest possession of the mind. *He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

It is observable that the ineffable grace of God in the *communication* of spiritual blessings, is not more celebrated by the inspired penman than the stupendous method in which they are imparted. That eternal life should be bestowed on sinful men, is the subject of their devout admiration; but that it should be bestowed at such a cost, is still more so. They appear to conceive it impossible for such an apparatus to terminate in a less glorious result.

A cold and sceptical philosophy may, I am aware, suggest specious cavils against the doctrines of revelation on this subject; cavils which derive all their force, not from the superior wisdom of their authors, but solely from the inadequacy of human reason to the full compre-

hension of heavenly mysteries. But still there is a simple grandeur in the fact, that God has *set forth his Son to be a propitiation*, sufficient to silence the impotent clamours of sophistry, and to carry to all serious and humble men a firm conviction that the law is exalted, and the justice of God illustriously vindicated and asserted, by such an expedient. To minds of that description, the immaculate purity of the divine character, its abhorrence of sin, and its inflexible adherence to moral order, will present themselves in the cross in a more impressive light than in any other object.

Eighthly. However much we might be convinced of the competence of vicarious suffering to accomplish the ends of justice, and whatever the benefits we may derive from it, a benevolent mind could never be reconciled to the sight of virtue of the highest order finally oppressed and consumed by its own energies; and the more intense the admiration excited, the more eager would be the desire of some compensatory arrangement, some expedient by which an ample retribution might be assigned to such heroic sacrifices. If the suffering of the substitute involved his destruction, what satisfaction could a generous and feeling mind derive from impunity procured at such a cost? When David, in an agony of thirst, longed for the waters of Bethlehem, which some of his servants immediately procured for him with the extreme hazard of their lives, the monarch refused to taste it, exclaiming, *It is the price of blood!* but *poured it out before the Lord.* The felicity which flows from the irreparable misery of another, and more especially of one whose disinterested benevolence alone exposed him to it, will be faintly relished by him who is not immersed in selfishness. If there be any portions of history, whose perusal affords more pure and exquisite delight than others, they are those which present the spectacle of a conflicting and self-devoted virtue, after innumerable toils and dangers undergone in the cause, enjoying a dignified repose in the bosom of the country which its example has ennobled, and its valour saved. Such a spectacle gratifies the best propensities, satisfies the highest de-

mands of our moral and social nature. It affords a delightful glimpse of the future and perfect economy of retributive justice.

In the plan of human redemption, this requisition is fully satisfied. While we accompany the Saviour through the successive stages of his mortal sojourning, marked by a corresponding succession of trials, each of which was more severe than the former, till the scene darkened, and the clouds of wrath from heaven and from earth, pregnant with materials which nothing but a divine hand could have collected, discharged themselves on him in a deluge of agony and of blood, under which he expired,—we perceive at once the sufficiency, I had almost said, the redundancy of his atonement.

But surely deliverance even *from the wrath to come* would afford an imperfect enjoyment, if it were embittered with the recollection that we were indebted for it to the irreparable destruction of our compassionate Redeemer. The consolation arising from *reconciliation with God* is subject to no such deduction. While we rejoice in the cross of Christ as the source of pardon, our satisfaction is heightened by beholding it succeeded by the crown; by seeing him that was *for a little while made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, seated at the right hand of God, thence expecting till his enemies are made his footstool.*

Thus, whether we contemplate the economy of redemption as a divine expedient for reconciling the moral attributes of Deity with man's salvation, or, in its final result, to the Saviour himself, it is replete with moral congruity, and satisfies every demand of the understanding and of the heart.

Ninthly. If the principle of substitution be at all admitted in the operations of criminal law, it is too obvious to require proof that it should be introduced very sparingly, only on very rare occasions, and never be allowed to subside into a settled course. So many circumstances, we have already seen, must concur to render it fit, that the attempt to make it a matter of

frequent and ordinary occurrence, would be preposterous to the utmost degree. It requires some great crisis to justify its introduction, some extraordinary combination of difficulties, obstructing the natural course of justice; it requires, that while the letter of the law is dispensed with, its spirit be fully adhered to; so that, instead of tending to weaken the motives to obedience, it shall present a salutary monition, a moral and edifying spectacle.

Considerations such as these are more than enough to show that such a method of procedure must be of rare occurrence; and that to this circumstance, whenever it does occur, its utility must in a great measure be ascribed

The substitution of Christ in the room of a guilty race receives all the advantage as an impressive spectacle, which it is possible to derive from this circumstance. *He once suffered from the beginning of the world;* nor have we the least reason to suppose any similar transaction has occured on the theatre of the universe, or will ever occur again in the annals of eternity. *It stands amidst the lapse of ages, and the waste of worlds, a single and solitary monument.*

From numerous intimations in Sacred Writ, we are compelled to believe that, in the comprehension of its design, and the extent of its consequences, affecting every order of being, it leaves no room for a counterpart or parallel; that it is, so to speak, the master-piece of infinite goodness and wisdom, intended to exhibit the riches of divine grace as an object for the eternal contemplation of the highest intelligences. *To the intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places,* is the language of Paul, *might be made known, by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*

Though the mystery of the cross may be considered as primarily terminating itself on the restoration of the human race to order and happiness, we cannot doubt for a moment of its extending its reflected lustre much farther, of its forming a new epoch in the moral administration of the Deity, and giving birth to a new order of things in the heavenly world.

Nothing is more certain than that christianity is a system which is at present but partially developed, in condescension probably to our very limited faculties, which are incapable of comprehending it in its full extent.

Be this as it may, the dignity of our Lord's person, the design of his sacrifice, together with the avowed purpose of the Father to *gather together in him all things that are in heaven or in earth*, conspire to place it beyond all doubt, that the *substitution* of Christ is an *unique* event. With the praises due to *Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*, none will have merit to share; nor will the emotions of gratitude, which his matchless achievements inspire, ever be dissipated and impaired by being distributed among many objects. The name of Jesus will remain eternally distinguished from every other, as the name to which *every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, or things on earth.*

Tenthly. Once more, whenever the expedient of vicarious suffering is adopted, a publication of the design of that transaction becomes as indispensably necessary, as of the transaction itself; since none of the effects which it is intended to produce can be realised but in proportion as that is understood. Viewed in itself and considered apart from this, it would seem the height of injustice, and, in the room of improving, would give a violent shock to our moral sentiments. Punishment inflicted on the offending party speaks for itself, and when ordained by law, impresses the spectator with an instantaneous conviction of its justice and propriety.

With vicarious punishment it is just the reverse. It is a spectacle so far removed from the usual course of events, that nothing can reconcile the mind to it but a clear exposure of its origin and design, and the peculiar circumstances of the crisis which determined its adoption.

Hence we see the infinite importance, in the doctrine

of the cross, that not merely the fact of our Lord's death and sufferings should be announced, but that their object and purpose, as a great moral expedient, should be published to all nations. In vain would the apostles have proclaimed every where the fact, that Jesus of Nazareth, a person of spotless innocence, *was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day*, had they suppressed the mysterious design, the moral aspect of those stupendous transactions.

Apart from this, it would only have added one more to the humiliating examples of the purest virtue oppressed with calumny, and doomed to a violent, painful, and ignominious death. It might have called forth the tears of sensibility, and there it would have ended, without exerting the slightest influence on the prospects, or changing the destiny of men. But the cross of Christ was not exhibited as a tragic spectacle, adapted to move the commiseration of mankind, and excite their horror at the perfidy, cruelty, and ingratitude, which were the human precursors of, the means of producing, that catastrophe: such emotion it has already occasioned, and will to the end of time; but all this in perfect subordination to a higher order of sentiments arising from the contemplation of his sufferings as the price of our redemption; the matchless expedient which the wisdom of God, prompted by infinite compassion, devised for *reconciling the world unto himself*. The facts which compose the records of the New Testament, the miracles which illustrated the life of our Saviour, and the prodigies which attended his death, important as they are, viewed as the seals attesting his mission, are only subsidiary: the whole of these, together with the mission itself, owe their importance chiefly to his sacrifice.

In the preceding ages, many intimations were afforded of this mystery. Sin had scarcely made its entrance into the world, before the guilty pair were comforted by the promise of *a seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head*. The institution of vicarious sacrifices immediately succeeded, we have every reason to believe, by Divine appointment. The rejection of Cain's offering,

and the acceptance of Abel's, demonstrated the necessity of the shedding of blood. A system of figurative rites and ceremonies, intended as silent predictions of the future, in which bloody sacrifices occupied the chief place, were ordained by Moses as *shadows of good things to come*. The succeeding prophets, in long succession, proclaimed the advent, and depicted the character and sufferings of *him that was to come;* some with more particularity and perspicuity than others, but each with some trait or colour peculiar to himself; till at length, *in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.*

The doctrine of remission of sins, through the blood of that victim which was once offered for the sins of the world, forms the grand peculiarity of the gospel, and was the principal theme of the apostolic ministry, and is still pre-eminently *the power of God to salvation*. It is inculcated throughout the New Testament in every possible form, it meets us at every turn, and is, in short, the sun and centre of the whole system.

Here, then, we are permitted to explore and contemplate that mysterious wisdom of God which was hidden in the secret of his counsels from preceding ages and generations, *but is now made manifest by the preaching of the holy prophets and apostles*. Here we behold the Deity, in Christ Jesus, *reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses*. Here we discern the harmony of the divine attributes, as they are exerted and displayed in the astonishing work of man's salvation, the glory of God *shining in the face of Jesus Christ*, by which saints are changed into the *same image from glory to glory*. The cordial reception, the inwrought persuasion of this doctrine, cannot fail to purify the heart and renovate the character. The deepest conviction of the evil of sin, and the helplessness of the sinner, is necessarily involved in the belief of this all-comprehensive truth. For what estimate of the malignity and turpitude of sin must he have formed, who does nothing in vain, who saw that nothing would suffice for its expia-

tion, short of the precious blood of his only-begotten Son? And how fatal the impotence which required to be extricated from its miseries, to be relieved from its burden, at such a cost? To create man, nothing was required but a word, *He spake, and it was done.* But to recover him from the ruin in which sin had involved him, it was necessary for the Eternal Son to become incarnate, and *the Lord of life* to expire upon a cross. This is the mirror which reflects the true features and lineaments of moral evil, and displays more of its demerit than the most profound contemplation of the law, of the purity of its precepts, or the terror of its sanctions could have conveyed to any finite mind. In pouring its vials on the head of that innocent and adorable victim, it evinced its inflexible severity, its awful majesty, to an extent, and in a form never conceived before; and we may well suppose that superior intelligences turn from the contemplation of such a spectacle with a new impression of the Great Supreme, as *a just God, and yet a Saviour.*

He who derives from this doctrine the smallest encouragement to sin, has never either felt or understood it as he ought. He has never surveyed it in its most interesting aspect, in its relation to the character of God, the demands of his law, and the immutable rights of his moral administration. He has never, to speak in the language of scripture, *seen the Son* in such a manner as to *believe on him*; and, however he may be persuaded of the death of Christ as *a fact*, he is a total stranger to the doctrine of *Christ crucified.*

If the substitution of the Redeemer in the stead of a guilty race is admitted, it is easy to perceive that it is the only foundation of human hope; and that the attempt to combine it with any thing else as the material of justification, must necessarily be abortive. Nothing else can possibly stand in the same order. The merit of the Saviour, arising from his matchless condescension and love, in becoming *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, is of so elevated and transcendent a kind, as to disclaim all association with the imperfections of human virtue as the basis of justification. The price of redemp-

tion (to use a scriptural metaphor) has been paid; the justice of God is satisfied; a full and complete atonement has been made. Nothing remains on the part of the penitent sinner, but to receive the reconciliation, and, with the emotions of humble gratitude, to open his heart to that inspiration of love, which naturally results from the reception of so great a benefit.

The habitual contemplation of the cross of Christ, will be found the most effectual expedient for weakening the power of corruption, resisting the seductions of the world, and rising progressively into the image of God and the Redeemer.

It will, at the same time, lay the deepest foundation for humility. He who ascribes his salvation to this source, will be exempted from every temptation to exalt himself; and while he rejoices in the ample provision made for the pardon of his sins, and the relief of his miseries, he will join with the utmost ardour in the song of the redeemed: *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

NOTES OF SERMONS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Of the notes of sermons left by Mr. Hall, several were such mere skeletons that it did not seem expedient to publish them. Of those which have been selected for insertion, such as do not occupy more than eight or nine pages, seem simply to have been employed as pulpit notes, without any ulterior reference. Of the remainder some were undoubtedly and others probably, written more fully than his usual pulpit notes, that they might serve as the basis of a volume of sermons, which he intended to prepare for publication,* should the state of his health, and a moderate freedom from interruption, ever allow him to accomplish his wishes in that respect. As they now appear, however, they are all, in some measure, incomplete; not even the fullest of them are carried to half the extent of the preached sermons; and in but few is the *application* more than hinted.

It will not be expected, then, that these notes should evince the exquisite finish, in point of style, which they would have received from the author, had he prepared them at full length with a view to immediate publication; or that they should abound in those copious and accumulative amplifications of the subjects, or those touching and powerful appeals to the affections and conscience, by which his preaching was so eminently distinguished. Yet they will be found

* See Note of this Volume, p. 75.

to exhibit the same simple dignity and grace, often the same beauty and pathos, the same richness and variety of illustration, as his other works; while, if I mistake not, they manifest a more fixed and constant determination to elucidate and apply scriptural truth, a more vivid and awful conviction of the infinite importance of salvation to men who have lost the image and favour of God, and a more deep and pervading current of devotional feeling, than even the most admired of his former publications, eloquent, impressive, instructive, and often truly sublime, as they unquestionably are.

In preparing these notes for the press, no changes whatever have been made in the author's language.* In places where words are omitted, or the manuscript is illegible, the sense has been supplied by words introduced between the brackets. It was sometimes, however, exceedingly difficult to fill the chasms which thus occurred; and though I hope the correct sense has been generally caught and preserved, yet a few cases remain in which I am by no means confident that this desirable result has been obtained.

OLINTHUS GREGORY.

* To prevent misconception, it may be proper to state, that the references to texts at the feet of the pages are not in the original manuscripts, but have been annexed to save the reader the trouble of consulting a Concordance, in cases where it may seem desirable to examine passages in connexion with their context.

NOTES OF SERMONS.

I.

ON THE BEING AND NAME OF JEHOVAH.

Exod. iii. 14.—*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.**

I. LET us consider the import of the name; the incommunicable name.
II. The proof of his [God's] possessing the attributes included in it.
III. The probable reasons of his choosing to represent himself under this character.

I. The import of the word JEHOVAH. It comes from a word which denotes to be, to exist; and the proper import of it appears to be permanent, unchanging existence. In the word JEHOVAH is included the affixes and terminations of the future and of the past; implying that he centres within himself all past, together with all future, existence.

The name I AM in the LXX. is rendered ὁ ὤν.

In the first chapter of the Revelation of St. John, the Lord describes himself under the following character, "Who is, (ὁ ὤν,) and who was, and who is to come." It denotes eternal, original, unchanging Being.

Solve the difficulty respecting this name not being known to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob. He never

* Preached at Leicester, in October 1814.

used that name himself, though *Moses employs* it in reciting the communications he made to the nation.

II. We propose to demonstrate the existence of such a Being.

1. Something always must have existed, or nothing could have had an existence. To suppose the matter of this world, for example, to have arisen out of nothing, without any cause whatever, is, evidently, to suppose what is absurd and impossible.

2. Whatever exists of itself, and consequently from all eternity, can never cease to exist, and must be perfectly independent of every other being, with respect to existence, and the manner of its existence. Since it exists of itself, the cause and reason of its existence must, by the supposition, be in itself, not in another; it must have, so to speak, a perpetual spring of existence, independent of the operation or will of all other beings. It exists by absolute necessity. It exists because it cannot be otherwise than it is; for whatever can be so is contingent, not necessary. Hence it is absolutely unchangeable: which is sufficient to prove that matter is not that eternal, self-existent Being; because matter is undergoing continual changes; and, instead of being unalterable, is perfectly passive and indifferent to all changes whatever.

3. The Being who always existed, in and of himself, must be an intelligent Being, or a Being possessed of reason and understanding: for these exist; and since they could not arise out of nothing, they must have been produced by something or other. But they could not have been produced by what was unintelligent. Reason and understanding could no more have been caused by what had none, than matter could have arisen out of nothing. Take a lump of clay, or of any kind of inanimate matter, and ask yourselves whether it is not in the highest degree absurd to suppose that the power of remembering, of reasoning, of judging, should arise from that, as a cause. It is, plainly, just as possible that light should spring from darkness as a cause, as that which is incapable of thought should produce it. Whether the

power of thinking may possibly be superadded to matter, is not the question at present; admitting this were possible, it is plainly impossible that thought, or the power of thinking, should spring from inanimate matter as a cause. But as there are many beings possessed of reason and understanding, there must have been, at least, some one intelligent Being from eternity, or those thinking creatures could never have existed; since it is quite as impossible that thought and intelligence should arise out of unconscious matter, as that they should spring out of nothing.

As to the idea which some atheists have pleaded for, of an eternal succession of finite beings, such as we witness at present, without supposing any original, uncaused Being, it is evidently inconsistent with reason and with itself. For it affirms that to be true of the part, which it denies with respect to the whole: every particular being in the series, upon that supposition, depends upon a preceding one, yet the whole depends upon nothing; as if it were affirmed that there could be a chain infinitely long, each link of which was supported by the next, and so on, in each instance, and yet the whole absolutely depended upon nothing. The difficulty of supposing a being beginning to exist without a cause, is not at all lessened by supposing an eternal succession of such beings; for unless there be some first Being, on whom all the rest depend, it is evident the whole series hang upon nothing, which is altogether as impossible as that any one in particular should. Hence it is evident, there must have always been some one intelligent Being, whose existence is uncaused and absolutely eternal, unchangeable, and independent.

4. There is but one such Being. To affirm there is more than one, without reason, must, by the very terms, be unreasonable. But no shadow of reason can be assigned for believing in a plurality of such beings, because the supposition of one accounts for all that we see, as well, and even much better, than the supposition of more.

That there must be one underived, self-existent, eter-

nal, and intelligent Cause, must of necessity be allowed, in order to account for what we know to exist; but no reason can be assigned for supposing more. It is with the utmost propriety established as an axiom, that we ought in no case to assign more causes than will account for the effects. The harmony and order of the universe, and the sameness and universality of the laws which pervade every part of it, as far as our [knowledge]* extends, make it evident that it is the production of one eternal, intelligent Cause. Had it been the product of many, there would necessarily have been discrepancies, irregularities, and disorder in it, as the necessary effect of contrary plans and inclinations: at least it would have formed different systems, bearing the indication of their being the product of distinct authors; as we see no two individuals, left entirely to themselves, can be found, who would build a house exactly upon the same plan, of the same size, and with the same ornaments. The most fundamental laws of the material world [not only] pervade this globe which we inhabit, but are found to extend to the remotest bounds of the universe, as far as they have fallen under our observation, either by the naked eye or by telescopes. The compound [substance] of light which illuminates our system, is found to extend to the region of the fixed stars, immeasurably more distant from us than the sun. The law of gravitation pervades every particle of matter, at least within the solar system; and, there is every reason to believe, throughout the whole universe. Such simplicity and uniformity in the laws of nature, evince that they are the product of one and the same Intelligence.

III. We propose to consider why he chose to reveal himself, especially under this character, rather than under some one expression of his moral perfections.

* Mr. Hall's hand-writing is frequently so chaotic as to defy all interpretation; and words, and short portions of sentences, are sometimes omitted. In such cases, the sense is supplied conjecturally; and that the author may not be blamed for any imperfections in style or phraseology, which may thus be occasioned, the words introduced by the editor are uniformly placed between brackets, as above.—Ed.

1. This is an attribute of God, to which the heathen deities did not aspire. It was fit to be the name of that Being who was, when worshipped, to be maintained in the midst of surrounding idols, of a character totally distinct.

None of them pretended to be the supreme God, the Origin and Father of existence.

2. So abstract and elevated a conception of the Great Supreme, was less likely than [any] other to be perverted into image-worship.

No ideas are so impossible to paint, or represent under sensible forms, as self-origination, immutability, eternal existence, &c.

The import of Jehovah—not positive—but negative.

3. It exhibits that view of the divine character, which is *most peculiar* and appropriate to the Supreme Being, and from which his other perfections may most satisfactorily be inferred and deduced.

No other being possesses any degree of them. And from these may be inferred, his absolute, infinite perfection, rectitude, &c. &c.

This is the great, glorious, and fearful name, "The Lord our God."*

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II.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

Isaiah xxxi. 3.—*The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.*†

I. The spirituality of the Divine Nature is intimately connected with the possession of almighty power. The vulgar notion, which would restrict the exercise of power to what is corporeal, and deny it to that which is spiritual

* Deut. xxviii. 58.

† See vol. vi. pp. 1—23, for Mr. Joshua Wilson's notes of this sermon, as preached in 1822 and 1824.

and immaterial, is a mere prejudice, founded on gross inattention or ignorance. It probably arises chiefly from the resistance which bodies are found to oppose to the efforts to remove or displace them. But so remote is this from active power, that it is entirely the effect of the *vis inertiæ*, or the tendency of matter to continue in the [same] state, whether it be of rest or of motion. If we inquire after the original seat of power, we shall invariably find it in mind, not in body; in spirit, not in flesh.

The changes we are able to effect in the state of the objects around us, are produced through the instrumentality of the body, which is always previously put in motion by the mind. Volition, which is a faculty, if you please, or state, of the mind, moves the muscles and the limbs, and those the various portions of matter by which we are surrounded; so that in every instance, it is the spirit or immaterial principle which originally acts, and produces all the subsequent changes. Take away the power of volition, which is a mental faculty, and our dominion over nature is at an end. Within a certain sphere, and to a certain extent, the will is absolute; and the moment we will a certain motion of the body, that motion takes place. Though we are far from supposing that the Deity is the soul of the world, as some have vainly asserted, the power which the mind exerts over certain motions of the body, may furnish an apt illustration of the control which the Supreme Spirit possesses over the universe.

As we can move certain parts of our bodies at pleasure, and nothing intervenes betwixt the volition and the corresponding movements, so the great original Spirit impresses on the machine of the universe what movements he pleases, and without the intervention of any other cause. "He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast."*

It is impossible to conceive of motion arising of its own accord among bodies previously at rest, and motion

* Ps. xxxiii. 9.

is not essential to matter, but merely an incidental state; no account can be given of the beginning of motion but from the previous existence of mind; and, however numerous and complicated the links through which it is propagated, however numerous the bodies which are successively moved or impelled by each other, it must necessarily have originated in something immaterial, that is, in mind or spirit. It is as a Spirit that the Deity is the original author of all those successive changes and revolutions which take place in the visible universe, arranged by UNSEARCHABLE wisdom, to which it owes all its harmony, utility, and beauty. It is as a Spirit that he exists distinct from it, and superior to it, presiding over it with the absolute dominion of Proprietor and Lord, employing every part of it as an instrument passive in his hand, and perfectly subservient to the accomplishment of his wise and benevolent designs. To this great Father of Spirits, the very minds which he has formed are in a state of mysterious subordination and subjection, so as to be for ever incapable of transgressing the secret bounds he has allotted them, or doing any thing more, whatever they may propose or intend, than concur in executing his plan, or fulfilling his counsel.

II. His spirituality is closely connected with his invisibility: "The King eternal, immortal, invisible,"* "whom no man hath seen, or can see."†

Whatever is the object of sight must be perceived under some determinate shape or figure; it must be, consequently, bounded by an outline, and occupy a determinate portion of space, and no more; attributes utterly incompatible with the conceptions of an infinite being. He was pleased formerly, indeed, to signalize his presence with his worshippers by visible symbols, by an admixture of clouds and fire, of darkness and splendour; but that these were never intended to exhibit his power, but merely to afford a sensible attestation of his special presence, is evident, from the care he took to prevent his worshippers from entertaining degrading

* 1 Tim. i. 17. † 1 Tim. vi. 16.

conceptions of his character, by the solemn prohibition of attempting to represent him by an image or picture. And after he had appeared to the congregation of Israel on the mount, Moses is commanded to remind them that they saw no similitude.

(Here speak of the impiety of the church of Rome, as to these points.)

The only visible representation of the Deity, which revelation sanctions, is found in his Son incarnate, in "Emmanuel, God with us;"* "who is the image of the invisible God."† The picturing of the Deity tends to produce degrading conceptions of the divine nature, partly as it circumscribes what is unlimited, and partly since the human form will generally be selected, by leading men to mingle, with the idea of God, the imperfections and passions of human nature.

III. That God is *spirit*, and not flesh, is a view of his character closely connected with his omnipresence. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."‡

Matter is subjected to a local circumscription; God, as a spirit, is capable of *co-existing* with every other order of being.

IV. Because God is a *spirit*, and not flesh, he is possessed of infinite wisdom and intelligence. Thought and perception are the attributes of mind, not of matter; of spirit, and not of flesh; and for this reason, the original and great Spirit possesses them in an infinite degree. They cannot belong to matter, because matter is divisible into an infinite number of parts; so that, if

* Matt. i. 23. † Col. i. 15, ‡ Ps. cxxxix. 7—12.

the power of thinking subsists in these, there are, in reality, as many distinct thinking principles as there are parts, and the mind of every individual must be a congeries, or assemblage of an infinite number of minds. But if thought subsists in none of the parts separately taken, it cannot subsist in the whole; because a whole is nothing more or less than all the parts considered together, and nothing can be found in the whole, but what previously exists in the several parts.

During the union between the soul and the body, the organs of the latter become the instruments of perception; but it is the mind alone which thinks, which alone is conscious, which sees in the eye, hears in the ear, feels in the touch. The Infinite Spirit is, consequently, all eye, all ear, all intelligence, perception, and.....

V. The spirituality of the Divine Nature lays a foundation for the most intimate relation between the intelligent part of the creation and himself. He is emphatically "the Father of Spirits." The relation of the parent to the child is very intimate and close, because the parent is the *instrument* of his being: but God is the AUTHOR. The earthly parent is our father after the flesh, the heavenly is our father after the *spirit:* and in proportion as the mind constitutes the most important portion of our nature, the relation subsisting between us and God is the most interesting and the most essential. "He is not far from any of us, seeing we are his off spring; in him we live, and move, and have our being."* The body connects us with the external universe; the soul connects us with God. The flesh is his production; the *spirit* is his image: and, as the former separates us from him by a dissimilarity of nature, so the latter assimilates us to him by the possession of principles and laws congenial with his own.

VI. The spirituality of the Divine Nature fits him for becoming our eternal portion and supreme good. That which constitutes and secures our felicity, must be

* Acts xvii. 27 28

something out of ourselves; since we find ourselves utterly inadequate to be the source of our own enjoyment, we find that, without allying ourselves to an object distinct from our own nature, we are desolate and miserable. To retire within our own nature in quest of happiness, is an idle and fruitless attempt. The mind feels itself fettered and imprisoned until it is allowed to go forth, and unite itself to some foreign object.

Again, to form the happiness of a mind must be the prerogative of something superior to itself; nor is there any greater superiority conceivable than that of being the source of enjoyment, the bestower of happiness on another. But while it is superior, it must be congenial in its nature. A spiritual being must possess spiritual happiness; the proper enjoyment of the mind must consist in something mental.

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III.

OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT OF TWELVE LECTURES ON THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.*

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

Jude 3.—*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.*

LECTURE II.

ON THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST.

Matt. xxii. 41, 42.—*While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?*

FOUR classes of passages adduced in proof of this.

I. Those passages which speak of the origin of Jesus

* Delivered at Leicester in 1823.

Christ, and which accompany this by a specification of "the flesh" in such a formula that the flesh is never employed in a similar manner in the history of men.

II. Those passages in which it is affirmed by Jesus Christ and by his disciples, that he did come down from heaven to the earth, and that by virtue of his name.

III. Those passages which, though they do not exactly assert that Jesus Christ existed before he came into our world, yet this is the necessary conclusion from them.

IV. One passage in which our Lord directly affirms this proposition in so many words, and no other proposition (John viii. 58.)

LECTURE III.

ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

Matt. xxii. 41, 42.

This attempted to be proved from those passages in which the titles of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ, of which there are *three* kinds:

I. Those in which he is styled the Son of God.

II. Those in which he is styled not the Son of God, but God himself.

III. Those which are quoted by the apostles from the Old Testament, in which the word Jehovah is ascribed to Jesus Christ.

LECTURE IV.

The DIVINITY of Christ proved from those passages in which the creation of the visible universe is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. This fact is established by scripture testimony, and,

II. The attention directed to the necessary conclusion which is to be derived from it, That if Jesus Christ appear by scripture testimony to be the Creator of all

things, he is necessarily God; since the primary idea which man entertains of God identifies those perfections which created the world with the existence of Deity.

LECTURE V.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED FROM HIS BEING THE OBJECT OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

Worship may be considered as *mental* or *local*. It is to *mental* worship, as consisting of those sentiments of adoration of the Deity for his great mercies, a dependence upon the Author of them, a desire of his favour, and submission to his will, which mark every devout christian, and expressed in the language of prayer or praise, to which this part of the discussion is chiefly confined.

LECTURE VI.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED FROM CERTAIN MISCELLANEOUS CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH COULD NOT WITH CONVENIENCE BE REDUCED TO ANY ONE HEAD, SIMILAR TO THOSE ALREADY BROUGHT FORWARD.

I. If Jesus Christ be not a divine person, let me say, it is utterly inconceivable how he can discharge the office and assumption of Head of the Church, and Lord of the christian dispensation.

II. The simple humanity of Christ is utterly inconsistent with those perfections which are ascribed to the Saviour; since there is not a single attribute of the divine nature which is not found ascribed in different forms to our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The idea of the simple humanity of Christ is utterly incompatible with that ardour of sentiment, of which he is represented in every part of scripture as the object.

IV. The Divinity of Christ is plain, from the fact of his being created and appointed the Judge of the Universe.

LECTURE VII.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED TO BE NOT A NEW DOCTRINE, BUT THAT IT WAS KNOWN BEFORE THE NICENE COUNCIL HELD IN THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTH CENTURY, BY REFERENCES TO THE FATHERS:—BARNABAS, HERMAS, IGNATIUS, CLEMENS ROMANUS, POLYCARP, JUSTIN MARTYR, THEOPHILUS BISHOP OF ANTIOCH, IRENÆUS, TERTULLIAN, CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, ORIGEN, AND CYPRIAN.

[The above five Lectures upon the Divinity of Christ were preached from the same text; Matt. xxii. 41, 42.]

LECTURE VIII.

ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Matt. xxviii. 19.—*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The first proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit appears to result from the manner in which the Spirit, whatever is intended by that word, is mentioned in the Scriptures.

In order to understand this it is necessary to reflect upon the meaning of the word "Spirit."

The first meaning of the term Spirit, is wind, or breath. (John iii. 8.)

The next use of the term Spirit, in the Scriptures, and other writers, in analogy to this, is to denote the invisible and immaterial part of man, in distinction from that which is corporeal, fleshly, and tangible. (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

Again, It is applied to those supernatural agents who are supposed not to be clothed with gross flesh and blood, and not to be possessed of bodies, or any fleshly vehicle whatever. (Luke xxiv. 39; x. 17, 20.)

The fourth meaning of this term is very agreeable to the former. By way of distinction, the word Spirit is applied to the third person in the blessed Trinity; that is, THE SPIRIT, by way of eminence; and it appears to be so employed when it is preceded by the definite article: τὸ πνεῦμα, THE SPIRIT.

The second argument on this subject is derived from

the obvious consideration, that the particular acts which are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, and its inspirations, are such as are totally inconsistent with any idea but that of his being a proper person.

Speaking is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. (2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Acts xiii. 2.) Approbation is ascribed to the Spirit. (Acts xv. 28.)

The passion of grief is often applied to the Spirit of God. (Eph. iv. 30; Isaiah lxiii. 10.)

Suffering or permitting is predicated of the Holy Spirit. (Acts xvi. 7.)

Sin can be committed against nothing but a person; but Peter addresses Ananias in these words, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? &c. (Acts v. 3, 4; Matt. xii. 32.)

The third argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit, is derived from the personal pronouns applied to the Spirit of God, in such a manner as cannot be accounted for, except upon the obvious supposition of the intention of our Saviour to represent the Spirit of God under the character of a person. (John xiv. 16—26; xv. 26; xvi. 13.)

In the fourth place, the passage which has been taken as the foundation of this discourse, appears to afford an irrefutable proof of the truth for which we are contending; because the Holy Spirit is here associated in such a manner with two real and divine persons, as would render the connexion unaccountable, if a real person was not understood in the third as well as in the two former instances.

LECTURE IX.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

1 Cor. xv. 3.—*For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.*

I. The first argument in proof of the atonement of Christ, is, that the death of the Saviour is repeatedly stated to be a proper sacrifice.

LECTURE X.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

1 Cor. xv. 3.

II. The second argument for this doctrine is this; That the importance which the inspired writers attach to the blood of Christ is utterly inconsistent with the socinian hypothesis, of his death being merely an example, and as that of a martyr sealing his testimony with his blood.

III. The inspired writers mention the subject of the death of Christ in such a manner as implies its being a real and proper substitution.

IV. The Scriptures in numerous passages declare, that Jesus Christ is the proper cause and author of our salvation, and all the spiritual benefits which the gospel announces.

V. The exaltation of Jesus Christ at the head of the universe, which is expressly declared to be the reward of his sufferings and death, is utterly inconsistent with any supposition short of their being expiatory.

LECTURE XI.

ON THE PERSONALITY AND REAL EXISTENCE OF SATAN.

Matt. iv. 1.—*Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.*

The evidence for this proposition must be a matter of pure revelation; for, when we consider the innumerable multitude of beings inferior to us, a chain that descends from ourselves to the very verge of non-entity by such mutations of littleness, that they are for ever eluding our senses; they leave it uncertain, that there are not as many besides in the middle stages as in open vision. The inference, rather than the contrary, is, that they exist in an equal scale—that there are as many gradations of beings raised above us, as there are beneath us. An ascending series is as probable as the descending, though we may not be as familiar with one as with the other.

Nor is it improbable that there are invisible or spiritual agents in an inferior order to man. When we consider the infinite variety of forms of which nature is susceptible, it is not improbable that there are in existence, beings, either purely spiritual, or possessed of a vehicle so refined as to elude our senses, and, therefore, justly styled spirits.

But here let us consider the tenour of scripture on this subject:—

I. The sacred record gives us an idea of a spiritual order of beings styled angels.

II. Let us examine the solutions, given by the socinians, of the language of scripture on the subject, and see whether these solutions will answer the various occasions on which it occurs, and whether the difficulty of the passages can be considered as removed by the interpretation which these solutions suggest.

Those who oppose the doctrine of the real existence of Satan, suppose in general that the words Satan, and Devil, are used as a prosopopeia, or personification, though what they are intended to personify they cannot agree [about]. Sometimes they are supposed to personify evil in the abstract; at other times, the Jewish magistrates and priests; at other times, the Roman magistrates and rulers; and at other times, a personal enemy to the apostle Paul in the church.

LECTURE XII.

ON THE SPIRIT OF SOCINIANISM.

Psalm xix. 7.—*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

I. It is a peculiar characteristic of this system, that, as far as it is distinguished from the orthodox, it consists entirely of negations, and is marked by its possessing nothing of all, or nearly all, of those doctrines which the other parts of the professed disciples of Jesus Christ consider most precious and most saving.

II. Unitarianism has a close affinity to deism.

III. Another feature in this system is its anti-devotional character.

IV. A remarkable feature in the system of the socinians, is their mixture along with their doctrine of metaphysical speculation, which is more replete with danger than any of the errors before-mentioned.

V. Another feature in this system, is the tame submission to human authority, which seems to distinguish, above all other persons, those who compose the class styled Modern Unitarians.

VI. The last feature which I shall mention, in the system of the socianians, is their zeal for proselytism.

IV.

ON CHRIST'S DIVINITY AND CONDESCENSION.

PHIL. ii. 5. 9.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation.**

THAT species of excellence to which such language can be applied with sobriety, must be carried to a height and perfection which requires no ingenuity to discover it; it must strike all eyes, and ravish all hearts.

But since it is benevolence, not in the general idea of it, but under the specific form of condescension, that we are seeking after, we are under the necessity of looking, in the passage before us, for some obvious and striking contrast or opposition between the dignity of the Saviour, and those instances in which he appeared to depart from that dignity. A visible disparity must subsist betwixt what he did, and what he might, from his pre-eminent elevation, have been expected to do.

A part of the Saviour's character, to which the in-

* Mr. Hall's notes, here given, do not present an outline of the whole sermon, but merely a statement of the principal part of the argument. A tolerably full account of the entire sermon, as it was preached in London, in June 1813, is inserted in the sixth volume, pp. 89—99. ED.

spired writers are continually adverting, and on which they dwell with impassioned energy, must unquestionably present itself in a very conspicuous light, so that no interpretation can for a moment be admitted, which requires much ingenuity to discover the very existence of that virtue it is adduced to illustrate.

There are two opposite opinions entertained respecting the person of Christ, to which, without adverting to the intermediate ones, we shall at present confine our attention, with a view to determine which of these accords best with the professed design of the apostle in introducing it, which is, to illustrate the wonderful condescension of the Son.

The first of these opinions involves the divinity of Christ, supposing him to be the proper Son of God, who assumed our nature into a personal union with himself; and, having in that nature lived a life of poverty and humiliation, expired on the cross for human redemption. The second considers him as a mere man, who had no existence whatever till he came into our world.

Now, let us consider which of these two opposite views best accords with the passage under consideration, contemplated as a professed illustration of his marvellous condescension, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." We are willing to admit the correction of the common version, suggested by our opponents, and consider the meaning of the latter clause, that he "did not eagerly retain the likeness of God." The force of the adverb which introduces the subsequent clause, and the general structure of the passage, appear to me to justify such an alteration; nor are we aware of any advantage occurring to the system we oppose by such a rendering. The socinians suppose that the purport of this member of the sentence is to assert, that though our Lord was possessed of miraculous power, by which he might have drawn to himself that homage which is only due to the Supreme Being, yet he declined making such a use of these powers. The first instance of his matchless humility and condescension, on

their hypothesis, is in his not impiously turning the weapons with which he was armed, against their Author thus employing himself to establish, in his own person, that which it was one great end of his mission to subvert. That humility with which the apostle was so much enraptured [consisted, then,] in [our Lord's] not being guilty of the grossest ingratitude and impiety; in not betraying his trust by advancing his own honour and interest on the ruins of his from whom he derived his commission. That our Saviour could not have acted the part which he is supposed to have declined in this instance will surely be admitted; but what a preposterous illustration is that of matchless condescension, which is placed in a mere abstinence from impiety and rebellion!

From the preliminary remarks we have made, I trust it must be sufficiently evident that this cannot be the illustration which St. Paul designed to furnish of unparalleled lowness and condescension. It deserves to be remarked too, that in this sense, "the form of God" belongs equally to every person who has possessed miraculous powers to an extent not inferior to those exerted by our Saviour, which, as we learn both from the Acts of the Apostles, and from the express language of the Saviour himself, was the case with his apostles. In consequence of those powers, St. Paul was, on one occasion, made an object of idolatry, which he disclaimed with the utmost vehemence and abhorrence; so far was he from assuming any extraordinary merit on account of declining so impious a distinction. Besides, let me ask, would such a use of the supernatural succours afforded our Saviour, as to suffer them to be the occasion of his being worshipped, have produced their withdrawment? If they would not, there must be some legitimate ground for his being worshipped, inapplicable to every other case. If they would, what is there admirable in his declining to convert them to a purpose which he knew would issue in their extinction? Can the inspired writer be supposed for a moment to introduce, with so

much pomp and solemnity, a branch of our Lord's conduct which the smallest portion of prudence sufficiently accounts for?

"He made himself of no reputation," or, more literally, "he emptied himself," "he divested himself;" the writer most unquestionably means, of somewhat which he heretofore possessed. But of what, on the hypothesis of the simple humanity of Christ, did he divest himself? As this clause commences the positive statement of the instances of his humility, preceded by, and contrasted with the dignity involved in the attribute of "being in the form of God," it seems necessary to understand it in relation to that prior dignity. But this on the socinian hypothesis, is impossible, since they place the form of God in his possession of miraculous energy, of those supernatural powers, of which from the time of his entering on his ministry, he neither divested himself at any time, nor suspended the exercise. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" nor is there the slightest intimation throughout the whole evangelical history, that his humility was rendered conspicuous by his declining the exercise of miraculous powers. Here, then, the illustration, upon the supposition we are combating, completely fails at the very outset, from the total absence of that bold and striking contrast which the first member of the sentence leads us to expect. The form of God is attributed to him as the basis of a certain elevation, let its precise import be what it may. And, when the antithetic form of expression prepares us to expect something opposed to it, our expectation is frustrated, and the form of God is still retained. Did this divesture consist of his descending from a superior station in society? But this he never possessed. His worldly rank and estimation, humble as it was, was as great in the last, as in the first period of his ministry. To decline a possible distinction, and to lay aside a distinction already possessed, are certainly things very distinct; nor is it easy to conjecture why, if the former was intended, the latter was expressed; besides that, admitting such a confusion of language

to be possible, the conception conveyed bears no relation to the form of God.

The words of the apostle evidently suppose that our Saviour possessed, in the first instance, some great and extraordinary distinction; that in the execution of his commission, from motives of pure benevolence, he submitted to a state of great comparative meanness and humiliation. The order of the words, as well as the very species of excellence they are designed to illustrate and enforce, necessitate the placing of the dignified attribute first. But on the hypothesis of the simple humanity of Christ, the real order of things, the actual course of events, is just the reverse. Our Saviour, on that hypothesis was elevated immensely above his native condition by his delegation as the Messiah, and from a state of extreme obscurity and poverty he became, in consequence of it, possessed of the form of God. His poverty and meanness compose the first stage of his history; and whatever elevation above his equals he afterwards possessed, was purely the effect of his appointment to the office of the Messiah. So that, in the office he sustains, he exhibits a marvellous instance of incredible elevation from meanness, instead of affording a striking example of voluntary humiliation. On the socinian hypothesis the whole of what is truly admirable is, that a mean and obscure individual should have been raised from so much meanness, not that he voluntarily submitted to it. It must be obvious to the thoughtful and intelligent, that this hypothesis completely frustrates the design of the passage, and presents the whole matter in an inverted position.

His public undertaking, in the room of affording an unparalleled instance of condescending benevolence, is the greatest example of eminent virtue conducting to illustrious honour, the world ever witnessed.

In a complex train of action, involving considerable space of time, and a great variety of events, if there be any conspicuous feature insisted on in the character of the agent, it ought to be of such a nature as to pervade the whole mass. The benevolence and condescension of

our Lord are uniformly represented by the inspired writer as actuating him in the whole course of his proceedings, as the chief spring of his conduct, so as to characterize his whole undertaking. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith St. Paul, "how that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." His giving himself for the church is celebrated as a most interesting instance of condescension and love. But if, apart from his public engagements, as the great Teacher sent from God, he possessed no separate nor original dignity; if to these engagements he is indebted for all that distinguished him above the meanest peasant in Galilee, what candour or sobriety appear in such representations? If we listen to the writers of the New Testament, his undertaking the office he sustained, was a proof of matchless humility; if we look to the facts, we find all the honour he ever possessed was the pure result of these offices. That it is possible to combine with such views of his character the admission of an eminent portion of virtue, we are far from denying; but it is not that sort of virtue, nor includes any of that sacrifice of personal honour and interest, which such representation supposes.

V.

ON THE SPIRIT AND TENDENCY OF SOCINIANISM.

PSALM xix. 7.—*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

THE minute examination of the minor parts of a great and complex object, will not suffice to give us a just conception of it, unless it is joined with an attentive survey of it as a whole. We have hitherto been occupied with the consideration of the errors of the socinian or unitarian system in detail. We have endeavoured to evince the opposition of several of its fundamental tenets to the clear, unequivocal testimony of scripture;

and, in the course of the inquiry, have felt the necessity of descending to minute distinctions and tedious discussions. Could we even suppose the reasoning employed in the several branches of this extensive argument, to have wrought all the conviction we could wish, the conclusion might still continue destitute of an adequate impression of the general character and tendency of the system, against which these discourses have been directed. Instead of attempting a recapitulation of the topics discussed, and the arguments adduced, useless as it would possibly be if slight and general, and insufferably tedious if accurate and extensive; allow me to close these lectures by directing your attention to some of the distinguishing characteristics of the system, designated by the appellation of Modern Unitarianism.

I. It will occur to the most superficial observer to remark, that, as far as it differs from the orthodox, it is almost entirely a negative system, consisting in the bold denial of nearly all the doctrines which other denominations are wont to regard as the most vital and the most precious. It snatches from us almost every thing to which our affections have been habituated to cling without presenting them with a single new object.

It is a cold negation, a system of renunciation and dissent, imparting that feeling of desolation to the heart, which is inseparable from the extinction of ancient attachments; teaching us no longer to admire, to adore, to trust, or to love—but with a most impaired and attenuated affection—objects, in the contemplation of which, we before deemed it safe, and even obligatory, to lose ourselves in the indulgence of these delightful emotions.

Under the pretence of simplifying christianity, it obliterates so many of its discoveries, and retrenches so many of its truths; so little is left to occupy the mind, to fill the imagination, or to touch the heart; that, when the attracting novelty and the heat of disputation are subsided, it speedily consigns its converts to apathy and indifference. He who is wont to expatiate in the wide field of revelation, surrounded by all that can gratify the

sight or regale the senses, reposing in its green pastures and beside the still transparent waters, reflecting th azure of the heavens, the lily of the valley, and the ceda of Lebanon, no sooner approaches the confines c socinianism, than he enters on a dreary and melanchol waste. Whatever is most sweet and attractive in religion—whatever of the grandeur that elevates, or the solemnity that awes, the mind, is inseparably connected with those truths it is the avowed object of that system to subvert; and since it is not what we deny, but what we believe, that nourishes piety, no wonder it languishes under so meagre and scanty a diet. The littleness and poverty of the socinian system ultimately ensures its neglect, because it makes no provision for that appetite for the immense and magnificent, which the contemplation of nature inspires and gratifies, and which even reason itself prompts us to anticipate in a revelation from the Eternal Mind.

By stripping religion of its mysteries, it deprives it of more than half its power. It is an exhausting process, by which it is reduced to its lowest term. It consists in affirming that the writers of the New Testament were *not*, properly speaking, inspired, nor infallible guides in divine matters; that Jesus Christ did *not* die for our sins, nor is the proper object of worship, nor even impeccable; that there is *not* any provision made in the sanctification of the Spirit for the aid of spiritual weakness, or the cure of spiritual maladies; that we have *not* an intercessor at the right hand of God; that Christ is *not* present with his saints, nor his saints, when they quit the body, present with the Lord; that man is *not* composed of a material and immaterial principle, but consists merely of organized matter, which is totally dissolved at death. To look for elevation of moral sentiment from such a series of pure negations, would be "to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles,"—to extract "sunbeams from cucumbers."

II. From hence we naturally remark the close affinity between the unitarian system and deism. Aware of the offence which is usually taken at observations of this

sort, I would much rather wave them, were the suppression of so important a circumstance compatible with doing justice to the subject. Deism, as distinguished from atheism, embraces almost every thing which the unitarians profess to believe. The deist professes to believe in a future state of rewards and punishments,—the unitarian does no more. The chief difference is, that the deist derives his conviction on the subject from the principles of natural religion; the unitarian from the fact of Christ's resurrection. Both arrive at the same point, though they reach it by different routes. Both maintain the same creed, though on different grounds: so that, allowing the deist to be fully settled and confirmed in his persuasion of a future world, it is not easy to perceive what advantage the unitarian possesses over him. If the proofs of a future state, upon christian principles, be acknowledged more clear and convincing than is attainable merely by the light of nature, yet, as the operation of opinion is measured by the strength of the persuasion with which it is embraced, and not by the intrinsic force of evidence, the deist, who cherishes a firm expectation of a life to come, has the same motives for resisting temptation, and patiently continuing in well doing, as the unitarian. He has learned the same lesson, though under a different master, and is substantially of the same religion.

The points in which they coincide are much more numerous, and more important, than those in which they differ. In their ideas of human nature, as being what it always was, in opposition to the doctrine of the fall; in their rejection of the Trinity, and of all supernatural mysteries; in their belief of the intrinsic efficacy of repentance, and the superfluity of an atonement; in their denial of spiritual aids, or internal grace, in their notions of the person of Christ; and finally, in that lofty confidence in the sufficiency of reason as a guide in the affairs of religion, and its authority to reject doctrines on the ground of antecedent improbability;—in all these momentous articles they concur. If the deist boldly rejects the claims of revelation *in toto*, the unitarian, by

denying its plenary inspiration, by assuming the fallibility of the apostles, and even of Christ himself, and by resolving its most sublime and mysterious truths into metaphors and allegory, treads close in his steps. It is the same soul which animates the two systems though residing in different bodies; it is the same metal transfused into distinct moulds.

Though unitarians repel, with sufficient indignation, the charge of symbolizing with deists, when advanced by the orthodox, they are so conscious of its truth that they sometimes acknowledge it themselves. In a letter to Mr. Lindsey, Dr. Priestley, speaking of the celebrated Jefferson, President of the United States when he arrived at America, says, "he is generally reported to be an unbeliever;" he adds, "but if so, you know he cannot be far from us."

(Here introduce the passages from Smith's Testimony, Vol. I.)

There was a certain period in my life when I was in habits of considerable intercourse with persons who, to say the least, possessed no belief in christianity. Of these, it was never my lot to meet with one who did not avow great satisfaction in the progress of socinianism; they appeared to feel a most cordial sympathy with it, and to view its triumphs as their own. They undoubtedly considered it as the natural opening through which men escape from the restraints of revealed religion; as the high road to that complete emancipation which awaits them in the regions of perfect light and liberty.

Whoever has attentively investigated the spirit of modern infidelity, must perceive that its enmity is pointed chiefly to those very doctrines which unitarians deny; that their dislike is not so much to the grand notion of a future state of rewards and punishments, which sober theists admit, as to the belief of the fall, and the corruption of human nature, which are professed as the basis of the doctrine of redemption. It is, as it originally was, the cross of Christ which is foolishness to these Greeks; and here our opponents are confederated with

them, and affirm themselves most faithful and zealous allies. Infidels, however they may dissent from the pretensions to a revelation, will feel no lively interest in impugning it while it imposes no necessity of believing what materially contradicts their prejudices and passions. Their quarrel is not so much with the medium of communication as with the doctrine conveyed: and here socinianism offers a most amicable accommodation, by assuring them of a future state, in which the perfections of the Supreme Being oblige him to render them eternally happy. These men are not so perverse as to feel any repugnance to a Deity who has no punitive justice, and an eternity which has no hell. It is the constant boast of our opponents, that their system gives them such an advantage in an attempt to win over infidels to the christian cause, by its being purged of those doctrines which afford the chief matter of offence; and in this representation there is doubtless some appearance of truth. But whether, upon that account, they are likely to be more successful in converting [them] than ourselves may well be made a question. For, in the first place, they will not find it so easy a task as they suppose, to convince them that the obnoxious tenets are not the doctrines of the gospel; and next, if they should succeed in this, the difference between their system and pure theism, is so slight and inconsiderable, as to make it appear a matter of great indifference which they adopt. Unless they are prepared to call in question the moral attributes of Deity and a future state, they are all in possession of the unitarian gospel already, and that by a mode of acquisition more flattering to the pride of reason. In a much vaunted seminary, or college, as it was called, established above thirty years back, for the avowed purpose of propagating unitarianism throughout the kingdom, I have the highest authority* for affirming that a great proportion of the students became sceptics and unbelievers, and of none more than from those who

* Hackney College. The authority here referred to is that of the late Dr. Abraham Rees, who was one of the professors. He made the statement to Mr. Hall in the summer of 1797.—Ed.

attended the theological lectures. Had that institution continued, it bid fair to become the most prolific hot-bed of infidelity this country ever knew. Among those who had an education completely socinian, it is matter of palpable observation, that infidelity has prevailed to a great extent; nor will the genuine tendency of that system have an opportunity of completely developing itself in this respect, until the existing generation is swept away. In the denomination where it chiefly prevails, it has recently supplanted arianism, under which the greater part of its present disciples were educated, so that its influence in the formation of character has been shared with a preceding system, which however erroneous, is far removed from that total abandonment of all the peculiarities of the gospel which is involved in the socinian creed.

Fas est et ab hoste doceri. Surely the complacency felt by the avowed enemies of the christian religion for a particular modification of it, is not without its instruction or its warning, since, allowing them the ordinary sagacity necessary to discern their own interests, we may be sure they perceive in the object of their predilection the seeds of ruin to the christian cause; that they plainly see that unitarianism is a stepping-stone to infidelity, and that the first stage of the progress facilitates and almost secures the next.

III. A third feature in the unitarian system is the unfavourable influence it exerts on the spirit of devotion. It appears to have little or no connexion with the religion of the heart. Of all high and raised affections to God, *proudly ignorant;* love to Christ, involving that ardent attachment which enthrones him in the soul, and subordinates to him every created object, it systematically explodes, under the pretence of its being either enthusiastic or impossible. Mr. Belsham, in a recent work, argues at large against indulging or pretending to indulge any particular attachment to the person of the Saviour, such as he acknowledges his immediate disciples felt, but which, according to him, is no longer the duty of christians of the present day. The only reason he

assigns for this bold assault on the most vital part of practical christianity, is the invisibility of our Saviour,—a reason urged in open contempt of the sentiments of an inspired apostle, "whom," said he, "having *not* seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."*

By parity of reason, God, who is essentially invisible, must cease to be the object of our affections; and the obligation of loving him with all our heart, and all our strength, is at once cancelled and destroyed.

The devotional feelings inculcated in the Bible, are intimately and inseparably interwoven with humility and gratitude—the humility and gratitude of a penitent and redeemed sinner. That he who is forgiven much will love much, is the decision of our Lord; while he to whom little is forgiven will love little.† But the perpetual tendency of the socinian system extenuates the evil of sin, and the magnitude of the danger to which it exposes the sinner, and is calculated to weaken, beyond expression, the force of the motives [they supply].

By asserting the intrinsic efficacy of repentance, to the exclusion of the merits of the Redeemer, it makes every man his own Saviour; it directs his attention to himself, as the source to which he ascribes the removal of guilt, and the renovation of hope; nor will it permit him to adopt, in any obvious and intelligible sense, the rapturous language of the redeemed, "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Taught to consider the Lord Jesus in no other light than as the most perfect example, and the most enlightened of teachers, and believing that he has already bestowed all the benefits he is empowered to bestow, it is in vain to look for that consecration of the heart to his love, and of all the faculties of body and mind to his service, which may reasonably be expected from him who looks upon himself as a trophy of his power, and as the purchase of his blood. Not viewing himself as at any time exposed to condemnation, you must not expect him to celebrate,

* 1 Peter i. 8 † Luke vii. 47.

with elevated emotion, the riches of divine grace, much less that he should be transported with gratitude to God for the inestimable love evinced in the gift of his Son; when he considers it a high attainment to have learned that this Son is a mere man, on a level with himself. The unhappy disciple of this system is necessarily separated and cut off from the objects most adapted to touch the springs of religious sensibility. He knows nothing of a transition "from death unto life;" nothing of the anxieties of a wounded and awakened conscience, followed by "joy and peace in believing;" nothing of that "love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" nothing of the refreshing aids and consolations of that Holy Spirit whose existence he denies, whose agency he ridicules; nothing of that ineffable communion of spirit with God and the Redeemer, the true element of life and peace; nothing of the earnests and foretastes of that heaven which his system covers with a dense and impenetrable veil.

Facts, on this subject, concur with theory: for no sooner is a minister of the gospel transformed into a socinian, than he relinquishes the practice of extempore prayer, and has recourse to a written form. We are far from condemning the use of forms, where they are adopted from a conscientious preference; nor can we doubt that many members of the establishment, whose habits have combined with them the most devout associations and feelings, find them useful helps to piety. But, that those who have never used them before should find them necessary the moment they have embraced a particular system; that they should feel, as some of the most *eminent* have confessed, an absolute incapacity, from that time, of praying without the aid of a book, affords a portentous indication of the spirit of that system. To be smitten dumb and silent in the presence of that heavenly Father whom they approached before with filial freedom and confidence; to be unable or indisposed to utter a word without artificial aids, where they were wont to pour out all their hearts, evinces the visitation of a new spirit, but most assuredly not that spirit "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Correct, elegant, spiritless—

replete with acknowledgements of the general goodness of God, the bounties of his providence, and his benign interposition in the arrangements of society, and the success of the arts and sciences which embellish and adorn the present state—seldom will you hear any mention of the forgiveness of sins, of the love of the Saviour; few or no acknowledgements of the blessings of redemption. An earthly, unsanctified tincture pervades their devotions, calculated to remind you of any thing rather than of a penitent pleading for mercy, "with groanings that cannot be uttered."

In all other dissenting communities, there are meetings for the express purpose of prayer, but has any thing of that nature ever been heard of among socinians? If they have any meetings out of the usual seasons of worship, they are debating clubs, several of which have been established among them in the metropolis on the Lord's day.

Among other dissenters, the religious observance of the Lord's day is considered as of the first importance, and he who made light of it would forfeit with them all credit for piety. Among the unitarians it is the reverse. Mr. Belsham, who seems to affect the character of their leader, has written vehemently against the observance of a Sabbath, denouncing it as one of the most pernicious of popular errors; and has lost no reputation by it.

Another of their principal writers has denounced public worship. In short, it is not easy to conjecture where these attacks will end, and whether they will suffer any of the institutions of christianity to remain unassailed.

IV. But it is time to advert to another part of the system of modern unitarianism, which, in my humble opinion, is pregnant with more mischief and danger than any of those we have just mentioned. I mean the fatalism and materialism with which, since Dr. Priestley's time, it is almost universally incorporated. The first socinians were so jealous of every opinion which might seem to infringe on the freedom of the human will and man's accountability, that they denied that the foreknowledge of God extended to human volition and

contingent events. They carried pelagianism to its utmost length. The modern socinians have been betrayed into the contrary extreme. They assert, not only that the foreknowledge of the Deity is extended to every sort of events, but that he has connected the whole series of them in an indissoluble chain of necessity; that the Deity is the efficient cause of all that takes place, of evil volitions as well as good; that he is, properly speaking, the only agent in the universe; that moral evil is his production, and his only; and that, strictly speaking, no one can be said to be accountable for any of his actions, since they were the inevitable result of necessary laws, and could not possibly have been otherwise than they were; that the human mind is a machine governed by principles to whose operations it is perfectly passive.

Who does not see that, upon this theory, the distinction between virtue and vice, innocence and guilt, is annihilated, and the foundation of rewards and punishments in a future world completely subverted? Agreeably to this, Dr. Priestley declares, in his treatise on this subject, that a perfect necessitarian, in other words, a philosopher of his own stamp, has nothing to do with repentance or remorse. Let these views of human nature prevail universally, and a frightful dissoluteness of manners, and a consequent subversion of the whole fabric of society, must infallibly ensue.

Alarming as these principles are, they form but one portion of the perilous innovations introduced by the sect of modern unitarians. With the dangerous speculations already recited, they connect the following: that the nature of man is single and homogeneous, not consisting of two component parts or principles, body and soul, matter and spirit, but of matter only; that the soul is the brain, and the brain is the soul; that nothing survives the stroke of dissolution, but that, at the moment the thinking powers of man are extinguished, all the elements of his frame are dissolved, his consciousness ceases, to be restored only at the period of the final resurrection.

From these premises it seems to be a necessary inference, that the hope of a future state of existence is entirely delusive; for, if the whole man perishes, if all that composes what I call myself is dissipated and scattered, and I cease to exist for ages as a sentient and intelligent being, personal identity is lost, and being once lost, it is impossible to conceive it ever restored without the greatest absurdity. Thus the very subject of a future life, the very thing of which it is affirmed, perishes from under us, on the unitarian hypothesis; and a future state can be predicated of any man only in a lax and figurative sense.

Matter is incessantly liable to mutation; the matter of which our bodies are composed is so eminently so, that it is generally thought by physiologists that every particle of which it is constituted disappears, and is replaced by fresh accession in the course of about seven years. Let it be admitted, then, that the constitution of human nature is homogeneous, or, in other words, that it consists of matter only, and it will necessarily follow, that in the course of forty-nine years the personal identity has been extinguished seven times, and that seven different persons have succeeded each other under the same name. Which of these, let me now ask, will be rewarded or punished in another life?

Such are the moral prodigies which disfigure the system of modern unitarianism; such the hopelessness of reconciling it with human accountability, and the dispensation of rewards and punishments in the world to come.

V. The unexampled deference it displays to human authority. This may excite surprise, because there is nothing which its abettors proclaim [with] such loud and lofty pretensions, as their unfettered freedom of thought, their emancipation from prejudice, and their disdain of human prescription. They, and they only, if we believe them, have unfurled the banners of mental independence, have purged off the slough of obsolete opinion and implicit faith, and shine forth in all the freshness, vigour, and splendour of intellectual prowess.

VI. Their rage for proselytism, difficult to be accounted for on their principles.

VI.

ON ANGELS.

Heb. i. 14.—*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

In this part of the epistle, St. Paul is engaged in establishing the superiority of our Lord Jesus Christ to angels: of this he adduces various proofs out of the ancient Scriptures: the title of Son, by which he [God] addresses the Messiah; the command he issues, when he brings him into the world, that all the angels of God should worship him: "He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire; but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Nor did he ever say to the most exalted of these, "Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He then brings in the words of the text, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

As this is one of the most clear and precise accounts we meet with in the Sacred Volume, of the nature and offices of angels, it may form a proper basis for a few reflections on that subject. This account embraces two particulars:

I. They are ministering spirits.

II. They are sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.

I. They are spirits. They have not those gross and earthly bodies which we possess; sluggish, inactive, and incapable of keeping pace with the nimble and more rapid movements of the mind.—"Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flame of fire." They resemble fire in the refined subtlety of its parts, and the quickness and rapidity of its operations. They move with an inconceivable velocity, and execute their commissions with a despatch of which we are incapable of forming any [adequate] apprehension.

St. Paul styles them angels of light, probably not without a view to the ease with which they transport

themselves to the greatest distances, and appear and disappear in a moment. From their being called spirits, it is not necessary to conclude that they have no body, no material frame at all: to be entirely immaterial is probably peculiar to the Father of spirits, to whom we cannot attribute a body, without impiety, and involving ourselves in absurdities. When the term spirit is employed to denote the angelic nature, it is most natural to take it in a lower sense, to denote their exemption from those gross and earthly bodies which the inhabitants of this world possess. Their bodies are spiritual bodies, "for there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body;" the latter of which the righteous are to receive at the resurrection, who are then to be made equal to the angels.

The passage just before adduced seems to exclude the idea of the utter absence of matter: "who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flame of fire."

2. These spirits are very glorious. They occupy a very exalted rank in the scale of being, and are possessed of wonderful powers. They are celebrated by the Psalmist as "those who excel in strength." To this it may be objected, that David, in describing man, represents him as made a little lower than the angels: it should, I apprehend, be rendered, "for a little time lower than the angels," that is, during the time he [the Son of God] condescended to become incarnate. Their great power is sufficiently manifest from the works they have performed by divine commission:—the destruction of the first-born of Egypt; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; the destruction of an hundred and eighty-five thousand men in Sennacherib's army. One angel destroyed seventy thousand men by bringing a pestilence, when David numbered the people of Israel.*

Their appearance was such as to fill the greatest of prophets with consternation and horror. "And there remained no more strength in me,† and my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength."

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. † Dan. x. 8.

With ease an angel rolled away the stone, a large fragment of rock, laid at the door of our Saviour's sepulchre: and at the sight of him the Roman guard trembled, and became as dead men.

"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened at his glory."

3. They are not less distinguished for moral excellence than by the possession of great natural powers. The usual denomination given them in the Scriptures is "*Holy* angels." They consist of such spirits as stood fast in their integrity, when many of their associates involved themselves in ruin by wilful rebellion. They are styled by St. Paul, "elect angels," who are confirmed in a state of happiness by being, along with the church, reduced under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their confirmation, in a state of obedience and felicity, is owing (there is every reason to conclude) to their union with him, and their being included in an eternal choice of special election and favour.

They are Christ's holy angels. To this mystery there are several allusions in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth."

II. They are ministering spirits. Their employment and office is to minister in the presence of God. Their habitation is heaven, that is, the place where God has fixed his throne and manifests his glory. They are emphatically described by this circumstance, "The angels that are in heaven." There is, doubtless, a place in the immense dominions of the Deity, where God is beheld in his glory, and where he is worshipped with the highest forms of love and adoration. "Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne," &c.* Thither Jesus

* Matt. v. 34.

ascended when he left our world; there he sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and there it is that the holy angels reside, as their fixed habitation. From thence it was the rebellious spirits were expelled, "who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation."* "Bless the Lord, all ye his angels, that excel in strength; that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure."†

Their employment is to minister to God in the exalted services of the celestial temple. This is the proper business and happiness of heaven, and in this the holy angels are habitually employed. To contemplate the perfections, to celebrate the praises of the Great Eternal; to bow before him in lowly prostrations, and to render him the honour due unto his wonderful works in nature, providence, and grace, is their proper employ. As more of God is conspicuous in the mystery of redemption than in any other work, this will occupy a proportionable part in their praises. "And I beheld," saith St. John, "and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and around the four living creatures, and around the four-and-twenty elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

It is not for us to conceive in what particulars the services of heaven consist, after what manner the glorious Supreme will display himself, and [by] what forms of adoration he will be praised. These mysteries are hid from us; "for who hath ascended up into heaven?" Yet we may be certain they will be, in the highest degree, pure, spiritual, and sublime; the noblest exercise of the most exalted faculties on the greatest and best of Beings.

The term ministering spirits (λειτουργικὰ) [used] here, signifies that species of services which is employed in

* Jude 6. † Ps. ciii. 21.

sacred things. It is true, St. John declares, that in the New Jerusalem he saw no temple, for a temple implies a building appropriated to the worship of God, in contradistinction to the secular purposes to which other edifices are applied. In this sense there will be in heaven no temple, because the whole of those blessed regions will be filled with the immediate presence of God, and so be a temple. There was no room for a separation of any part to a sacred and religious use, when all was sacred. The reason St. John assigns for this circumstance, sufficiently explains his meaning: "And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof."

On that immediate presence which fills the heavenly world, the angels are constant attendants; they continually stand before the Divine Majesty.

The most exact representation of the heavenly world, (considered as a place) that was ever given to men, was the ancient tabernacle, formed after the pattern given in the Mount.* The mercy-seat was attended with two cherubim, and the two curtains which formed the tabernacle, were filled with figures of cherubim, "With cherubim of cunning work shalt thou make them."†

In the visions of the ancient prophets, when a glimpse of heaven was given, every appearance of God was attended with creatures of an angelic order. "A fiery stream issued forth, and came forth from before him; thousands of thousands ministered unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. (Daniel.) See also Isaiah: "In the year king Uzzah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim." Ezekiel "beheld the cherubim, over which was a sapphire firmament, over which a throne was seen, and one sitting upon it like the appearance of a man, whose head was encircled with a rainbow. "This," he adds, "was an appearance of the likeness of the glory of God."

* Heb. ix. 23, 24. † Exod. xxvi. 1.

"Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a great rushing sound, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and the noise of a great rushing."*

Our Lord warns us against despising the least of those who believe on him, from this consideration, "That their angels do always behold the face of God in heaven." The angel who appeared to Zachariah, thus announces himself, "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God."

Improvement of Part I.

I. Let us reflect on the greatness of God, and the glory of Christ.

II. On the dignity of religion, considered as constituting the employment and felicity of such glorious spirits.

Second Part.

They are sent forth to minister for those who are to inherit salvation.

I. Though they are so superior, they, with much alacrity, engage in offices of love to believers, from a consideration of the dignity which awaits them; they are hastening on to possess salvation.

They (believers) are soon to be associated with them, to be sharers of their privileges, partakers of their glory, Infantine as is their present weakness, they are considerable on account of their future greatness. The infant of the family is not neglected or despised by the more advanced branches of it; they anticipate the developement of its faculties. They know the time will arrive when it will attain an equality with themselves. They that shall be thought worthy to obtain that world, at the resurrection of the just, "shall be equal to the angels."

* Ezek. iii. 12, 13.

1. Though they are now mortal, they are the heirs of immortality.

2. Though they are encompassed with infirmities and imperfections, those blessed spirits well know they will shortly become entirely like Christ.

3. Though they are immersed in trifling cares, and have necessarily much intercourse with the things of time and sense, they entertain noble thoughts, cherish high expectations, and, having the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered. And, ever and anon wet with the dews of heaven, and anointed afresh with the Holy Spirit, they wear upon their spirits the divine impress, which these blessed spirits distinctly perceive.

II. The intimate union of believers with the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom angels are in immediate subjection, [also] entitles them to their benevolent offices. They are members of Christ, his brothers and sisters; they are taken into a still closer relation than the conjugal one: and are parts of that nature in which the Lord is glorified.

The nature of the benevolent offices [angels] perform for the church. They are not the servants of the church but the servants of Christ for the benefit of the church. Their stated employment is to minister in heaven, whence on particular occasions, they are sent on benevolent embassies for the good of the church. What are these services? What have angels done, and what are they doing for the benefit, and in behalf of the heirs of salvation?

1. The heirs of salvation are indebted to them for much prophetic information, as well as for many important directions. See Daniel. Paul going to Macedonia, Peter rescued from prison, &c.

2. The heirs of salvation have often been indebted to angelic interposition for their protection in seasons of extreme danger; for example, Daniel in the lion's den; Peter's rescue from prison; Peter and John, (see Acts v.); the deliverance of Elisha at Dothan.* "He shall give his angels charge over thee, lest thou dash thy foot

* 2 Kings vi. 15—17.

against a stone." "The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him." Many secret deliverances for which we are indebted to angelic influence.

3. The support which good men have received in the season of extreme pain and suffering. "An angel appeared unto him, strengthening him."

4. A moral influence, equal in extent, though of an opposite nature, to that which evil spirits exert.

5. To assist in dying moments; to convey the spirit to the mansions of peace; they let in those gleams of heaven into the soul, [which are then so greatly needed, and so truly refreshing.]

6. To gather the saints [together] in the presence of Christ at the last day, and to vindicate their cause, by a final victory over their enemies. "The harvest is the end of the world, and the angels are the reapers." "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

Improvement.

I. How great the dignity of real christians.

II. How delightful the prospect of the heavenly world

VII.

ON THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN.

1 Pet. v. 8.—*Your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

It is highly probable, independently of revelation, that there are many orders of beings superior to [man]*

* Mr. Hall preached three sermons at Leicester on the personality and agency of Satan, besides that which he introduced into his series of lectures on the Socinian Controversy. The substance of these he also condensed into a single sermon, and preached at Cambridge in October, 1823, and afterwards at Bristol. Indeed, he thought the subject of so much moment, and so strangely neglected, that he prepared his three sermons for publication; but, by some singular accident, the

To suppose our own species to be the highest production of divine power, would indicate irrational and puerile presumption. When we consider the infinite variety of creatures presented to our notice in the descending scale betwixt us and nothing, it is agreeable to analogy to conceive the number is not less of those which are above us; the probability of which is enhanced by the discoveries now made of the extent of the universe, and of the existence of bodies, compared to which the globe which we inhabit is but a spot. While there are known to be material systems immensely superior in magnitude to that with which we are conversant, what should lead us to doubt that there are, in the intellectual world, beings possessing an equal mental superiority? It surely will not be pretended that there are any properties discernible in man, that mark *him* out as the most transcendant workmanship of Deity, the masterpiece of almighty power, or that there is any ground for supposing creative energy suspended its operations here, rather than at any other point in its progress. The distance between us and nothing is finite, yet the interval is occupied and filled up with innumerable orders of sensitive beings; how improbable is it, then, that the distance between us and Deity, which is infinite, is an empty void!

Nor is it any just objection against the supposition in question, that these superior orders are not usually discernible by our senses. The information derived from our senses, aided and corrected by reflection, is a sufficient guide in the practical concerns of life; but it is a very uncertain criterion by which to determine the actual existence of things beyond a very narrow limit. Of

manuscript was lost, just as he had completed it. After an interval of three or four years, he recommenced the labour of writing these sermons, but never finished it. Some imperfect notes have been found since his death. They appear to belong to different discourses, and were evidently written at different times. Imperfect as they are, they open some interesting channels of investigation, and are therefore inserted in this collection.

For the general course of the author's reasoning, see his account of Lecture XI. in the summary of his lectures on the Socinian Controversy, page 123 of this volume.—Ed.

those that are known to exist, some beings are so minute as to elude their notice, others so vast as to exceed their grasp. There are, probably, many material substances, whose subtlety exempts them entirely from that cognizance; there are others which can only be perceived by the help of instruments.

Whether there is in the universe any being purely spiritual, and perfectly detached from matter, except the Great Supreme, is a question, perhaps, not easy to solve, nor is the solution of it at all essential to our present inquiry. God is a spirit, and we cannot conceive of any portion or modification of matter as entering into his essence, without being betrayed into contradiction and absurdity. In regard to every other class of being, it is, by many, conjectured that the thinking principle is united to some corporeal vehicle, through which it derives its perceptions, and by which it operates; while perfect spirituality, utterly separate from matter in any possible state, is the exclusive attribute of Deity. When angels are spoken of as spirits, this mode of expression may possibly denote no more than that the material vehicle with which they are united is of a nature highly subtle and refined, at a great remove from the flesh and blood which compose the bodily frame. Who will presume to set limits to the creative power in the organization of matter, or affirm that it is not, in the hand of its Author, susceptible of a refinement which shall completely exclude it from the notice of our senses? He who compares the subtlety and velocity of light with grosser substances which are found in the material system, will be reluctant to assign any bounds to the possible modifications of matter, much more to affirm there can be none beyond the comprehension of our corporeal organs.

However probable the supposition of the existence of creatures of a nature more exalted than our own, nothing can be affirmed with certainty on the subject, beyond the dictates of revelation. In regard to a class of beings, which are confessedly not objects of any of our senses, the evidence of their existence (if they exist at all) must be derived from divine testimony. Abstract reasoning,

however profound and accurate, presents nothing to the mind but the relations of its own ideas; while, for our knowledge of what exists without us, we are entirely indebted to observation and experiment. But neither observation nor experiment can extend to those departments of the universe that lie out of the reach of our senses. The province of philosophy, whether physical or mental, is to make an accurate survey of the mind and of matter, and to discover the laws to which they are subjected. To ascertain the laws of the material creation, the judicious inquirer not only diligently notices the appearances that present themselves, but puts the subject of his investigation into artificial situations, whence new appearances result; this mode of inquiry is styled experimental. In mental philosophy, a different method must be adopted. Mind cannot, like matter, be divided, compounded, or decomposed, by subjecting it to the action of external agents; and, consequently, there is here no room for experiment, properly so called. All that can be done, is carefully to observe the processes of thought and of emotion, and by attending to the operation of our mental faculties, to arrive at some general conclusions, the justice of which must, in every instance, be decided by individual consciousness.

This inconvenience, inseparable from all attempts to investigate the structure of the human mind, must, in my humble opinion, preclude the possibility of much original discovery, and will, probably, prevent metaphysics from ever obtaining the certainty and stability of science. While investigating the laws of matter, we can vary the situations in which it is placed, as much as we please [within certain practical limits], and retain it as long under our view; but mental phenomena form a Proteus, which is continually changing its aspect, and the objects of our observation are continually gliding away from us. Yet, while we acknowledge the incompetency of reason to ascertain the existence of a class of creatures superior to ourselves, and that all we can arrive at is a probable conjecture, it should be remembered that reason is equally incompetent to determine the

contrary. If it is unable to build, it is on the very same account, unable to destroy; whatever improvement philosophy may receive, however successful and brilliant its career, its conclusions, in no instance, apply to an economy which, being confessedly supernatural, is beyond its sphere, and governed by laws totally different from those which it is its business to explore.

Were all the secrets of the material world laid open, and the whole structure of the human mind, with all the laws of thought, volition, and emotion, perfectly developed and explained, we should not be a step nearer to a solution of the question under our present consideration, not at all more qualified to determine whether there be an order of superior intelligences, or what the station they occupied, or the faculties by which they were distinguished. In short, the utmost that philosophy can achieve is to make us acquainted with human creatures, and with some of the laws which govern the material and visible world. Whenever we extend our views beyond this, we have no *data* to proceed upon, [but] are all at once in the region of doubt and conjecture. It is a province to which the principles [of philosophy] cease to apply: ingenuity may amuse itself with endless suppositions, and fancy fill the void with splendid pictures; but as to discovery, the intellect of a Newton is upon the same level with that of a child.

It follows from hence that the attempt to set aside the doctrine on this subject, derived from scripture, under the notion of its being *unphilosophical*, is puerile and unmeaning. The truth is, that it is in no other sense unphilosophical, except that philosophy has nothing to do with it, that it implies a supernatural economy, to which its principles are totally inapplicable, and which it can neither affirm nor deny. Here, if any where, we must have recourse, "to the law and to the testimony;" if they speak not according to them, "there is no light in them."

Let me briefly advert, then, to the statements of the New Testament on this subject. I shall content myself with presenting the reader with a mere outline, without

attempting to exhaust the information which they impart.

The New Testament informs us, that there is an order of intelligent beings superior to the human race, which it usually designates by the name of angels, a name descriptive of their office, rather than their nature; that they are endowed with very elevated powers and capacities; that part of these, at a former [period], swerved from their allegiance to the "blessed and only Potentate," on which account they lost their first estate; that of these, one of preeminent rank and dignity took the lead in the revolt; that under the name of Satan he continues to rule the rest, who are styled his angels; that having established an infernal empire, he has ever been engaged in a malignant and implacable opposition to the will of God; that, envious of the happiness of our first parents, under the disguise of a serpent, he tempted the woman to violate the divine prohibition, by eating the forbidden fruit, whence we derived a corrupt and mortal nature; that the same evil spirit who is styled "the god of this world," the "prince of the power of the air," perpetually exerts himself in seducing men to sin; that he succeeded in effacing the knowledge of God, and establishing idolatry throughout the world; that Jesus Christ was appointed, by his divine Father, to be the antagonist of Satan, and to "destroy his works;" and that, before the close of time, his dominion will be established upon the ruin of that of Satan, and the world restored to happiness and to God. This, as it appears to me, is a fair outline of the doctrine of the New Testament on this mysterious subject. In a word, Christ and Satan are represented in the Scriptures as the heads of two opposite empires, the one the empire of light and holiness, the other of darkness and sin; the one embracing all the elements of moral good, the other all those of moral evil; while the whole human race are divided by their sway.

To a philosophical mind, not imbued with the light of revelation, such a view of the moral state of the world will, probably, appear strange and portentous; nothing

is easier than to suggest plausible objections against it. It may be admitted that it is not such a representation as reason, left to itself, would have prompted us to anticipate. This is a circumstance, however, which, in judging of [such matters], is entitled to little attention; whatever their previous improbability, they must be received or rejected according to the amount of evidence adduced for their support. Even in the affairs of ordinary life, our previous conceptions of improbability are found to afford no criterion of truth; much less can any reliance be placed on them in judging of the laws of a superior and supernatural economy.

In asserting the personality and agency of Satan, we are not, it should be remembered, proposing to our reader a speculation in philosophy; we are asserting a fact beyond the limits of its jurisdiction; a fact for which we profess to produce no other evidence besides the declarations of Scripture. If its testimony is not sufficient to decide the question, we are out at sea, nor is it possible to specify what doctrines we are warranted to receive on its authority; especially when we consider that to enlarge our knowledge of the invisible world would appear to be the proper business of a revelation, whose exclusive glory it is to bring "life and immortality to light." We have no controversy, at present, with those whose lax notions of inspiration embolden them to reject the express testimony of an apostle. We assume as granted, the truths of inspiration, so far at least that they may be safely trusted in the annunciation of christian doctrine; and all we shall attempt is to establish that literal interpretation of their language on the subject under our present consideration, wherein we infer the personal existence and agency of Satan.

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There is no necessary alliance between moral rectitude and intellectual elevation; nor need we go far in search of high intellectual vigour, combined in the same individual, with a portentous degree of pravity. In free and voluntary agents, we learn from constant observation,

that the greatest range and comprehension of intellect is no security against obliquity of will; nor is it at all certain that a preeminent degree of mental superiority may not, under certain circumstances, become itself a source of temptation. Be this as it may, the only order of rational creatures with which our experience has brought us acquainted, have, we are certain, fallen from rectitude; and therefore, whatever other conclusions we may draw from that fact, it ought, on the principles of analogy, to facilitate our belief, on proper evidence, that a similar catastrophe has involved a distinct and superior order. Whatever difficulties may accompany [the question of] the origin of evil, and however incompetent we may be to conceive how the transition is effected from innocence to guilt, or how to reconcile its foresight and permission with divine rectitude and human freedom, as this is is not the place where *they* [these difficulties] first occur, they are not entitled to be considered as objections against the doctrine which we are endeavouring to support. They exist exactly to the same extent in relation to the fall of man, of which we have experimental evidence. The doctrine which affirms the existence of evil spirits of a superior order, who have sunk themselves into perdition by disobeying their Maker, is perfectly analogous to the history of the only species of rational creatures with which we are acquainted; we find its counterpart in ourselves.

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There is one objection which has been frequently urged against the popular view of this subject, which it will be proper to notice before we proceed further in the discussion, lest the prejudice it may [excite] should impair the conviction which the evidence might otherwise produce. It has been said, that to ascribe to Satan such an interference in the moral concerns of the world, as is implied in his incessantly tempting men to sin, is to suppose him omnipresent, a supposition repugnant to the nature of a finite being. It must be confessed the Scriptures of the New Testament teach us to conceive

of satanic agency as concurring in almost every act of deliberate sin: he is said to have filled the heart of Ananias; to have entered into Judas, "after he had taken the sop;" and to be "the god of this world, who worketh mightily in the children of disobedience." To infer from thence, however, that any proper omnipresence is attributed to this apostate spirit, betrays inattention to the obvious meaning of the inspired writers.

We are taught to conceive of Satan as the head of a spiritual empire of great extent, and comprehending within itself innumerable subordinate agents. The term Satan, in application to this subject, is invariably found in the singular number, implying that there is *one* designated by that appellation. His associates in the primeval rebellion are spoken of in the plural number, and are denominated his angels. Thus the punishment reserved for them at the close of time is said to be "prepared for the devil and his angels." What their number may be it is in vain to conjecture; but when we reflect on the magnitude of the universe, and the extensive and complicated agency in which they are affirmed to be engaged, we shall probably be inclined to conjecture, that it far exceeds that of the human race.

In describing the affairs of an empire it is the uniform custom of the historian to ascribe its achievements to one person, to the ruling mind under whose auspices they are performed, and by whose authority they are effected: as it is the will of the chief which, in absolute monarchies, gives unity to its operations, and validity to its laws, and to whose glory or dishonour its good or ill fortune redound; as victories and defeats are ascribed to him who sustains the supreme power, without meaning for a moment to insinuate that they were the result of his individual agency. Thus, in relating the events of the last war, the ruler of France would be represented as conducting at once the most multifarious movements in the most remote parts of Europe, where nothing more was intended than that they were executed, directly or in-

directly, by his order. He thus becomes identified with his empire, and spoken of as though he pervaded all its parts. Thus the sovereign of Great Britain, by fiction of speech perfectly understood, is represented as the direct object of every offence, and as present in every court of law, conscience, * *

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Conceiving Satan, agreeable to the intimations of the word of God, to be the chief or head of a spiritual dominion, we easily account for the extent of the agency he is affirmed to exert, in tempting and seducing the human race; not by supposing him to be personally present wherever such an operation is carrying on, but by referring it to his auspices, and considering it as belonging to the history of his empire. As innumerable angels of light fight under the banners of the Redeemer, so, there is every reason to conclude, the devil also is assisted by an [exceedingly] numerous host of his angels, composing those principalities and powers over which Jesus Christ triumphed, in the making "a show of them openly." On this principle, the objection we are considering falls entirely to the ground, and no more ubiquity or omnipresence is attributed to Satan by our system, than to Alexander, Cæsar, or Tamerlane, whose power was felt, and their authority acknowledged, far beyond the limits of their personal presence.

The attentive reader of scripture will not fail to remark, that the statement of the existence, the moral propensities, and the agency of Satan, is extended nearly through the whole of the sacred volume, from Genesis to the Revelations; that its writers, in their portraiture of our great adversary, employ the same images, and adhere to the same appellations throughout; that a complete identity of character is exhibited, marked with the same features of force, cruelty, malignity, and fraud. He is every where depicted as alike the enemy of God and man; who, having appeared as a serpent in the history of the Fall, is recognized by St. Paul under the same

character in express allusion to that event,* and afterwards by St. John, in the apocalypse, as "that old serpent, the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."†

We have, therefore, just the same evidence of the real personality of Satan, as of the Holy Spirit, and exactly of the same kind; both are described by inspired persons; to both, volitions, purposes, and personal [characteristics] are ascribed. A uniformity of representation, an identity of character, distinguished respectively by the most opposite moral qualities, equally pervade the statements of scripture as to each, to such a degree, that, supposing the sacred writers to have designed to teach us the proper personality of Satan, it is not easy to conceive what other language they could have adopted. Notwithstanding, however, this accumulation of evidence, there are those who contend, that all that is said on this subject is figurative, and that the devil, or Satan, is a mere prosopopœia, or personification; but what it is designed to personify they are not agreed; some affirming one thing and some another, according to the caprices of their fancy, or the exigencies of their system. The solution most generally adopted by our modern refiners of revelation is, that Satan is a figure or personification of the principle of evil. For the benefit of the illiterate part of my audi nce, it may be proper to remark, that a personification is a figure of rhetoric or of poetry, by which we ascribe sentiment, language, and action, to things which, properly speaking, are utterly incapable of these: for example, Job, in a lofty strain of poetry, inquiring where is the place of wisdom; "Man," saith he, "knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. *The depth saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not with me. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.*"‡ In this bold personification of the *Depth*, the *Sea*, *De-*

* Cor. xi. 3. † Rev. xii. 9. ‡ Job xxviii. 12—14, 22.

struction, and *Death*, there is grandeur and imagination, but no obscurity; every one perceives, that in bestowing sentiment and language on these natural objects, the writer merely obeys the impulse of poetic enthusiasm. St. Paul, on several occasions, makes use of the same figure, and personifies the Law, the Flesh, and other things of an abstract nature, and no one mistakes his meaning. The legitimate use of this figure is, to give vivacity and animation to the exhibition of sentiment; every sober writer employs it sparingly and occasionally, and will rarely, if ever, have recourse to it, unless he has elevated the imagination of his reader to a pitch which prepares him to sympathize with the enthusiasm it betrays. A personification never dropt, nor ever explained by the admixture of literal forms of expression in the same connexion, is an anomaly, or rather absurdity, of which there is no example in the writings of men of sense. Of all the figures of speech by which language is varied and enriched, the personification is, perhaps, the most perspicuous; nor is there an instance to be found, in the whole range of composition, sacred or profane, in which it was so employed as to make it doubtful whether the writer intended to be understood in a literal or figurative sense. Let those who deny the existence of Satan, adduce, if they are able, another example from any author whatever, ancient or modern, sacred or profane, in which this figure is employed in a manner so enigmatical and obscure, as to have been interpreted for ages in a literal sense. There is a personification spreading itself through the whole Bible, if we believe these men, [now] discovered for the first time, in writings which have been studied by thousands, possessed of the most acute and accomplished intellect, for eighteen hundred years, without one them, during all these ages, suspecting that it existed. It is scarcely necessary to say, that a more untenable position was never advanced; nor one, which, if they really believe that the sacred writers meant to be understood figuratively, evinces a more unpardonable inattention to the operations of thought, and

the laws of composition. On any other subject but religion, such a style of criticism could not fail to expose its authors to merited derision.

But let us, for a moment, wave the other objections to this solution, and, admitting it to be possible, examine how far it will answer its purpose, by applying it to some of the principal passages which treat of the agency of Satan. It is necessary to forewarn my hearers, that the devil, or Satan, according to the notion of our opponents, is by no means a personification, universally, of one and the same thing. It is a Proteus, that assumes so many shapes as almost to elude detection. Most commonly, it denotes the principle of moral evil; sometimes, however, it stands for the heathen magistrates, sometimes for the Jewish priests and scribes, and at others, for the personal opponent of St. Paul at Corinth.

Let us first apply this solution to our Lord's temptation in the wilderness. "Then," says Matthew, "was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."* This, our opponents tell us, with great confidence, was a visionary scene, and their reason for it is curious enough. It is the form of the expression, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness." Mark has it, "sendeth him into the wilderness."† On this principle of interpretation, whatever is represented as performed by Christ under the agency of the Spirit, must be understood as visionary; and when it is said, "he entered in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," it must be understood as intending not a real, but a fictitious or visionary removal. It is true that Ezekiel speaks of himself as brought to Jerusalem, in order to witness the abominations practised there, while it is evident his actual abode was still in Babylon; but, that no mistake may arise, he repeatedly assures us, that it was in the visions of God. But no such intimation is given in the instance before us. It has all the appearance of a literal matter of fact, and as such it has been currently received by the church of God. Let it be admitted, however, for

* Matt. iv. 1. † Mark i. 12.

argument's sake, to have been a visionary representation; the question still recurs, What is meant by the tempter in this scene? and whether any of the solutions which have been given can possibly be admitted. The devil here cannot be intended to denote the pagan magistrates, or Jewish high-priests, or scribes, because our Lord was alone. As little can it mean the principle of evil. The principle of evil must be the principle of some mind; it cannot subsist apart. Where, in this instance, is the mind in which it inhered? None were present but the Saviour and the tempter; if the tempter was not a person, but the principle of evil, that principle must have belonged to the Saviour himself; it must have consisted of some sinful bias, some corrupt propensity in himself, with which he maintained an arduous struggle. But this is refuted by the concurrent testimony of the sacred writers, who affirm him to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;"* who emphatically designate him under the character of him "that is holy, him that is true."† It is to be hoped that our modern socinians have not rushed to that extreme of impiety to impute a principle of evil to the mind of the immaculate Lamb of God, "in whom was no sin."‡ And yet, without this, no intelligible account can be given of the temptation, except that which has been universally received in the church.

Let us apply their theory to another very important passage in the sixth chapter of the Ephesians. We there find the following exhortation: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." By these principalities and powers, our modern socinians tell us we are to understand a general personification of all wicked opposition to the progress of christianity, whether from the civil or

* Heb. vii. 26 † Rev. iii. 7. ‡ 1 John iii. 5.

ecclesiastical power, and, in the present instance, more particularly, "the opposition of Jewish priests and rulers."* But how, we ask, is this comment consistent with the negative branch of St. Paul's assertion, "for we wrestle not with flesh and blood?" Flesh and blood is a very common form of expression in the sacred writings, employed to denote the human race, or mankind. Thus our Lord tells Peter, "flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;"† evidently intending to affirm, that he did not derive his information from men, but from God. "Immediately," says Paul, "I consulted not with flesh and blood;"‡ that is, he consulted no human authorities; "nor did I go up to Jerusalem," he adds, "to those that were apostles before me." The first part of the apostle's proposition then evidently is, that the opposition he had chiefly to sustain was not from men, nor from adversaries of the human rank and order. The question naturally arises, From what then? He adds, "from principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world," or, according to Griesbach, "of this darkness;" that is, say the unitarians, from Jewish rulers and priests. We must perceive in a moment the absurdity of the proposition thus interpreted, where that is denied at the beginning which is affirmed at the close: and human nature, expressed by a general term which can signify nothing else, is formally excluded from the context, to make way for a class of adversaries who are of that very nature, and no other.

It is equally impossible to put the other construction on the passage, that of the principle of evil; because that cannot admit of the plural number. It will surely be allowed that no intelligent writer, who was desirous of personifying the principle of evil, abstractedly considered, would speak of it in the plural form, under the figure of "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world," since such a mode of speaking could be productive of nothing but mental confusion. This

* Improved Version, p. 450. † Matt. xvi. 17. ‡ Gal. i. 15.

passage, therefore, affords an irrefragable proof of the existence and agency of Satan.

Let us proceed to apply the principle of our opponents to another passage, and inquire, whether it be possible to elicit from it a sense worthy of the wisdom of inspiration. The passage to which I refer is in the first Epistle of John, the third chapter: "My little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous: he who committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil hath sinned from the beginning: for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Let us for a moment suppose, with the unitarians, that the devil is here put for a personification of the principle of evil, or of sin. And what, let me ask, can be more trite, futile, and ridiculous, than gravely to assert, that the principle of evil, or sin, sinned from the beginning? Who needed to be informed of this? And what sense can we affix to the phrase, "from the beginning"? which, if it conveys any idea at all, must be intended to instruct us, that the principle of sin did not begin to be sinful from a late or recent, but from a certain very distant epoch, denoted by the words, "the beginning." But is not this more like the babbling of an infant, than the dictates of divine inspiration?

The following passage of John is [beset] with precisely the same difficulties. "Ye," said our Lord, addressing the unbelieving Jews, "are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it."* Here, on the hypothesis of our opponents, we find our Saviour labouring to convince his hearers that the principle of evil, or sin, has been guilty of certain specific enormities, such as murder and lying; that it did not continue in a state of moral rectitude, because there is no rectitude in it. Nothing can be more trifling; since, when the very

* John viii. 44.

principle of evil in the abstract is under contemplation, every partial kind of evil is, *ipso facto*, included. Had our Lord discoursed in this manner, it might very properly have been said of him, in a sense very different from that which was originally intended, "never man spake like this man."

The legitimate employment of a prosopopœia, or personification, requires that the literal term, expressive of the passion or principle personified, be strictly adhered to. He who wishes to personify piety, patriotism, or benevolence, is never accustomed to drop the literal term by which these principles are respectively denoted. He gives sex, sentiment, and language to each, but on no occasion shall we find him substituting an unusual name for the things which he intends to personify. To change the very terms themselves for certain symbolical appellations, would have the effect of involving his discourse in incomprehensible mystery: it would be introducing an enigma, not a personification. Where shall we find a parallel in the whole compass of the Bible for such a licentious abuse of personification? Besides, allowing that this absurd kind of personification could be at all tolerated, the symbolical name ought, at least, to have a determinate meaning; it should invariably stand for one and the same thing. The change of the proper term, for the name of a symbolical personage, could be justified on no other principle than that it was universally understood to be the substitute of some one object; but in the present case, the word Satan has no precise or definite idea attached to it; it is sometimes the principle of evil, sometimes the Jewish priests and rulers, at others, the pagan magistrates. How [repugnant to every sound principle of interpretation!]

VIII.

ON THE EXTREME CORRUPTION OF MANKIND BEFORE THE GENERAL DELUGE.

GEN. vi. 11.—*The earth was corrupt before God, and was filled with violence.*

THE account in the Scriptures of the history of the world before [the flood] is extremely concise, but, at the same time, extremely interesting. Of the celebrated personages that then flourished, the names are seldom mentioned, and the transactions in which they were engaged, are not specified with any detail of circumstances. The inhabitants of the old world are involved in [obscurity]; they are made to pass before us like the shade of departed greatness, with an infallible judgement only passed by their Creator on their characters, and a distant declaration of their doom; as though it were the determination of God's providence to bury their memory in oblivion, and to make nothing distinctly legible but their destruction. Of the violences they committed, of the impiety they uttered, and of the miseries they mutually inflicted upon each other, the Holy Ghost condescends to give no particulars, but only stigmatizes them as atrocious criminals and rebels, whose enormous guilt exhausted the patience of their Maker, and rendered them unfit to live.

The same history informs us of a most atrocious murder, committed by the first-born man upon his brother, for no other reason than that he was wicked and his brother righteous. Such an event affords a view of human nature, in the early stage of its existence, which prepares us for the description given of human depravity in the context, "and the Lord looked, and beheld that every thought of the imagination of man's heart was evil, and that continually."* It was necessary explicitly to state the extreme degeneracy into which mankind were fallen, in order to justify the conduct of God in

* Gen. vi. 5.

bringing upon them the flood. For God to destroy the work of his hand,—to destroy that part of it which was made after his own image, was a most extraordinary measure in the conduct of providence, which nothing can account for but that extreme corruption which it is affirmed then overspread the world. In what that corruption particularly consisted; whether it involved the apostatizing from God to idols, or only manifested itself in gross acts of immorality; how long it had been accumulating ere it reached its height; and whether it was gradually or by sudden steps introduced; are circumstances of which we are not informed. All that we are expressly told is, that the earth was filled with injustice, rapine, and violence. From what we know of human nature and human affairs, we have reason to conclude that it was gradually superinduced, since great changes in the moral state of the world, whether in the way of improvement or deterioration, require a considerable space of time for their accomplishment. It is, on this account, next to impossible not to suppose, that the extreme degradation of manners under consideration was produced by slow degrees, and was affected by various causes. Some of these causes are, if I mistake not, suggested with tolerable clearness in the chapter out of which my text is taken.

We might with great truth assert, that the general cause of the extreme corruption then prevalent, was the defection of our first parents, and that consequent loss of true rectitude and holiness which they first sustained in their own persons, and then communicated to their posterity. This tendency to sin in human nature is, indeed, the prolific source of all particular vices, which flow from thence as their fountain. But, as a river, when it overflows its banks, must be swelled by accelerated floods or tributary streams, besides what it derives from its parent spring, so an extraordinary prevalence of vice, at a particular time, necessarily implies the cooperation of other causes, along with the original corruption of human nature. To say there is an inherent sinful bias in human nature, is sufficient to account for the

existence of a large portion of corruption at any time, but affords no reason for its prevailing at one time more than another. To account for such an event satisfactorily, some specific and particular reasons must be assigned besides this general one.

The purport of the remaining part of this discourse is to point out what may appear some of the probable reasons, and to deduce a few practical inferences from the whole.

Let me request your attention while I state some of the particular reasons which account for the remarkable and prodigious corruption which prevailed in the lives of men immediately before the flood.

I. It may be partly ascribed, with great probability, to the neglect and abandonment of the public worship of God. From the fact of Cain and Abel both presenting their offerings to the Lord, and from the acceptance of Abel's offering, because offered with faith, we may infer, that some time after the fall a mode of worshipping God was divinely prescribed, or how could Abel exercise faith in sacrificing; since faith implies, invariably, a divine testimony, or some divine interposition? We are further informed, respecting Cain, that, when the Lord remonstrated with him on the murder of his brother, he sentenced him to be a wanderer and vagabond; and Cain, deploring the severity of his sentence, said, "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid." It is added, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden."*

As his going out from the presence of the Lord is immediately followed by the declaration of his dwelling in a strange land, it is natural to suppose that the former expression denotes his quitting that country which God was *wont* in a peculiar manner to honour with his presence; where he afforded some spiritual manifestation of his power and glory.

* Gen. iv 14—16.

It seems, in or near the place where Adam and his sons dwelt, there was placed the shadow, or some bright and visible token, of the divine presence. The same is implied in the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, and the rejection of Cain's; for how could the former know that his was accepted, or the latter, that his was rejected, without some supernatural sign or token? Cain thus having, by the atrocious crime he committed, forfeited the privilege of approaching the place of divine audience; and going into a remote part where no such symbol of the divine presence was possessed, fell, in all probability, into total neglect of the public worship of God, and abandoned himself entirely to an irreligious and worldly life. Supposing this to be the case, it will readily account for much of that prodigious vice and impiety: for when once the worship of God is abandoned, a great restraint upon wickedness is removed out of the way. Conceive only to what a dreadful degeneracy of morals would this nation speedily advance, if no attention were paid to the sabbath, and public worship universally abandoned. The extreme importance of this duty, as a chief preservative of all religion and virtue, may be learnt from one remarkable passage in the writings of Paul: "Forget not the assembling of yourselves together," says he, "as the manner of some is:" "for if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."* Whence we may infer, that to forsake public worship is either precisely the same thing as absolute apostasy, or is the very next step to it.

II. The intermarriages betwixt the "seed of the righteous and the seed of the wicked," were, undoubtedly, another principal cause of the extreme corruption under consideration. "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose."† To understand the

* Heb. x. 25, 26. † Gen. vi. 1, 2.

meaning of this passage, which at first sight appears obscure, we must look a little further back in the narrative. We are there informed, that to Seth, the third son of Adam, was born a son, named Enos; it is added, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord."* The meaning of the inspired writer is, that in the days of Enos, the son of Seth, the first separation was made betwixt the true worshippers of God and the profane descendants of Cain and his associates. Adam, we learn, had sons and daughters born to him after the birth of Seth, but their names are not mentioned, partly because the true religion was preserved in the line of Seth, and partly because from him was continued the succession of patriarchs till Noah. The family of Seth, on account of its adherence to the true religion, were styled "the sons of God;" the descendants of Cain, and the other branches of the family, who united with him in his impiety, "the sons of men," denoting, that they were a carnal, irreligious race. The words rendered, "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," may with equal propriety be rendered, "then began men to be called by the name of the Lord." Those, then, were the persons whom the sacred writer denominates "the sons of God;" a race of men descended from Seth, who kept themselves apart, and refused affinity or connexion with the apostates from the religious worship of God. Among them was found the true church; the holy seed, whence the New World was to spring up after the flood; the sacred stock, out of which Christ himself was to arise.

While they kept themselves apart, and declined to unite with the apostate stock, religion continued in its purity, the overflowings of vice were restrained, and they were as "the salt of the earth." In process of time they yielded to the suggestions of carnal appetite, broke through the restraints of piety and prudence, and joined in affinity with the descendants of Cain and the other branches of the family, who followed his apostasy.

* Gen. iv. 26.

Tracing the almost necessary effects of such a proceeding, the children of Israel at a subsequent period were strictly forbidden to contract marriages with the Canaanitish and surrounding nations. "Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:—and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."* In the same spirit, and for the same reason, the apostle enjoins upon christians the avoiding of such unequal marriages: "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"†

III. The pride arising from the possession of great bodily strength, and great mental acquisitions and endowments, may be assigned as another cause of the remarkable corruption of men's manners in the times immediately preceding the flood. "There were giants in those days," says the sacred text; "and, moreover, when the sons of God, allying themselves to the daughters of men, had children born unto them, the same became mighty men, even men of renown."‡ The consciousness of superior or supernatural strength, in persons who are not tinctured with the fear of God, naturally disposes to a degree of violence and oppression; and that those giants, of whom Moses spoke, abused their prodigious strength to those purposes, *is evidently* [implied] in the sacred story. The strong oppressed the weak, and made the superiority of bodily force an instrument for establishing unjust domination and tyranny, until the whole earth became a scene of rapine, cruelty, and injustice.

But, besides these, it is evident, from the narrative, that the descendants of Cain distinguished themselves very early by the discovery and cultivation of arts and

* Exod. xxxiv. 12, 16. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. ‡ Gen. vi. 4.

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While they kept themselves apart, and declined to unite with the apostate stock, religion continued in its purity, the overflowings of vice were restrained, and they were as "the salt of the earth." In process of time they yielded to the suggestions of carnal appetite, broke through the restraints of piety and prudence, and joined in affinity with the descendants of Cain and the other branches of the family, who followed his apostasy.

* Gen. iv. 26.

Tracing the almost necessary effects of such a proceeding, the children of Israel at a subsequent period were strictly forbidden to contract marriages with the Canaanitish and surrounding nations. "Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:—and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."* In the same spirit, and for the same reason, the apostle enjoins upon christians the avoiding of such unequal marriages: "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? or what communion hath light with darkness? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"†

III. The pride arising from the possession of great bodily strength, and great mental acquisitions and endowments, may be assigned as another cause of the remarkable corruption of men's manners in the times immediately preceding the flood. "There were giants in those days," says the sacred text; "and, moreover, when the sons of God, allying themselves to the daughters of men, had children born unto them, the same became mighty men, even men of renown."‡ The consciousness of superior or supernatural strength, in persons who are not tinctured with the fear of God, naturally disposes to a degree of violence and oppression; and that those giants, of whom Moses spoke, abused their prodigious strength to those purposes, *is evidently* [implied] in the sacred story. The strong oppressed the weak, and made the superiority of bodily force an instrument for establishing unjust domination and tyranny, until the whole earth became a scene of rapine, cruelty, and injustice.

But, besides these, it is evident, from the narrative, that the descendants of Cain distinguished themselves very early by the discovery and cultivation of arts and

* Exod. xxxiv. 12, 16. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. ‡ Gen. vi. 4.

sciences; both these took their first rise among that godless race. Tubal Cain instructed in every artifice of iron and brass, and, probably, was the first inventor of warlike instruments. Jubal was the inventor of musical instruments, or, to speak in the language of scripture, "the father of all them that handled the harp and the organ." Naamah, from the manner in which she is introduced, was, probably, the inventress of some of the more exquisite kinds of needle-work. The first thing we are informed of respecting Cain, after the murder of his brother, is, his building a city, which he called Enoch, after the name of his son. From the whole narrative it may be confidently inferred that the descendants of Cain were endowed with a superior genius, and were the first who made themselves celebrated by the discovery and improvement of arts and sciences. Superior genius, united with extraordinary attainments, are, in themselves, valuable gifts; but when they are dissevered from the fear of God, nothing tends more powerfully to intoxicate and corrupt the heart. These envenom it with pride, these supply the sophistry which supports impiety, and extend the means and enlarge the capacity of doing mischief. They have a peculiar tendency to produce that confidence in human reason, that reliance on arms of flesh, which indisposes man to seek after God. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God."* From the history of modern times, we have abundant evidence, that great improvements in arts and sciences have not only no harmonizing or beneficial influence on irreligious minds, but that they have often just the contrary. Whenever God is not made the final end of all knowledge and of all talent, they lead the possessor further and further from him, and are the mere instruments and embellishments of vice, and serve merely to paint and adorn the sepulchre where virtue lies entombed. The descendants of Cain, like too many in the present day, were, indeed, men of renown; but, seeking this as the supreme good,

* Psalm x. 4.

and despising the honour that comes from above, they could possess no solid worth, and whatever there was that might bear the appearance of it amongst them, was hollow and insincere.

IV. I add, in the last place, their extraordinary longevity as another reason of the prodigious depravity which prevailed at that time. The lives of many of them, we learn, extended to nearly a thousand years. This remarkable circumstance, cooperating with the causes I have already mentioned, contributed greatly to the excessive corruption asserted in the text. It must have acted powerfully in several ways.

1. He who can indulge a reasonable expectation of living for a very long period in the world, considers himself as possessing a large estate. The value of any earthly possession rises, partly in proportion to the satisfaction it is capable of affording, and partly from its duration, Man, being naturally a prospective being, a being who looks forward to futurity, is, necessarily, more attached to every species of good, in proportion to its real or imagined permanence. How powerfully, then, must sensible and visible objects have attracted the heart of those who had a reasonable prospect of enjoying them for a thousand years! The possessions which attach us to the present world must have operated, in such circumstances, with a prodigious force.

2. Corrupt habits must, through such a long track of years, have had opportunity to fix themselves more thoroughly, to strike their roots more deeply, than during the contracted space of present existence.

3. The longevity of the antediluvians removed eternity to a greater apparent distance, and, therefore, naturally weakened its effects. If men put off the thoughts of death and eternity when they have such a short space to live as they have at present, how difficult would it be to impress [them] with a serious or alarming apprehension of it at the distance of a thousand years!

* * * * *

IX.

ON THE END OF MAN'S EXISTENCE.

Ezek. xv. 2.—*What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?*

THE vine-tree is weaker than most trees, so as to be unfit for any work, and would therefore be very contemptible but for that property it possesses of bringing forth a valuable and delicious fruit. On this account it is highly prized, and diligently cultivated. But if it fail of producing fruit, the only purpose to which it can be applied, is to turn it to fuel. Such is the figurative representation which the prophet gives us, in this passage, of man, considered especially as the object of divine care and culture. He is naturally capable of yielding a precious fruit; in this consists his sole excellency; this is the sole end of his existence; and if he fails in this, he is of no use but to be destroyed.

I. Man is naturally capable of yielding a most precious fruit: this fruit consists in living to God.

1. He is possessed of all the natural powers which are requisite for that purpose. He is endowed with reason and understanding, enabling him to perceive the proofs of the being of God, and to entertain just, though inadequate, conceptions of the principal attributes of his nature; his self-existence, his absolute perfection, his power, his wisdom, his all-sufficiency, his omnipresence, his holiness, justice, and goodness. Inferior animals do not; on which account he is a vine-tree amongst the trees of the wood; inferior in many properties to some of them, but superior in those particulars which fit him for this end, and on that account incomparably more valuable.

2. As we are possessed of natural powers, fitting us for the service of God, so he has bestowed upon us much care and culture, with an express view to this end. The religious instruction he gave to his ancient people, is frequently compared in scripture to the cultivation

which men bestow upon vines. "My beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," &c.* "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant."† He gave them his will, his ordinances, his prophets, and separated them from all nations by peculiar rites, that they might be to him for a name, and a praise, and a peculiar treasure, above all nations. He has done much more for us under the gospel. None can be ignorant of the intention of God in all these provisions. "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou now turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?"‡

II. This is the only end for which mankind are formed and preserved; this is the proper fruit of human nature, which admits of nothing being substituted in its room.

1. A mere selfish, voluptuous life, cannot be supposed to be the proper fruit of human nature. He who lives to himself is universally despised and condemned. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth to himself."‖ "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter."§

2. A life of social benevolence, in which the public good is preserved, without a supreme regard to God, cannot be this fruit. Can such persons be said to neglect the end of their existence? Undoubtedly; for the following reasons:

(1.) To do good to our fellow-creatures, without regard to God, is to forget the principal relation in which we stand, and, consequently, to neglect the principal duty. A right behaviour to each other is no proper compensation for the want of obedient regards to God: (instanced in pirates and rebels.) A regard to God is the root and origin of all real virtue.

(2.) The end of man's existence cannot, with any

* Isaiah v. 1. † Isaiah v. 7. ‡ Jer. ii 21.
‖ Hos. x. 1 § Deut. xxxii. 32.

propriety, be considered as confined to this world; but the proper end accomplished by mere social virtues, is entirely confined to the present state.

(3.) No collective number of men can be independent of God, more than a single individual; therefore no such collective body has a right to consult their common interest, to the neglect of God, any more than a single individual to pursue his individual interest. The aggregate of mankind appears something great and imposing in the eyes of men; in consequence of which a peculiar importance is attached to those actions which tend to the public good. The magnitude of the general interest, imposes a value on those actions which are adapted to advance so great an object. But, in the sight of God, all nations are as the "drop of a bucket;" "he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." Suppose all the subjects of a lawful prince were to agree to stand by each other, and to promote each other's interest to the utmost; would this be allowed by the prince as any atonement for a great and persevering rebellion? Or suppose a single individual so disposed, would not the result be the same? No other can be substituted for this.

III. He who answers not the end of his existence, is fit only to be destroyed. He is like a vessel marred in the hand of the potter, proper only to be broken.

The barren vine may be useful as fuel, and to this purpose it is much applied in eastern countries. Thus wicked men may be useful with a subordinate kind of usefulness, by their destruction.

1. They may thereby become edifying examples of the just vengeance of God, in order to deter others. That this will be one of the ends answered by the punishment of the wicked, seems intimated in several passages of scripture, as well as is supported by its analogy to human government. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."*

* Isaiah lxvi. 24.

2. They will serve to manifest those attributes of the Great Supreme which their conduct disowned, and which it seemed virtually to call in question. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"* This is a subordinate use, not a primary end. It is that for which men fit themselves, by their presumptuous and impenitent neglect of God.

(1.) What blindness attaches to those who live in the total neglect of God and religion!

(2.) What little room is there for that confidence which many place in correctness of deportment towards their fellow-creatures, while religion is not even pretended to be the governing principle of their lives!

(3.) What need have we all to examine ourselves, and seriously to inquire, whether we are yielding that fruit unto God, on which we have been insisting!

(4.) How ought those to be alarmed, when the result of such examination is, that they have been hitherto utterly without fruit! How strong the obligations on such, after considering their ways, to turn unto the Lord. And thankful should they be that space is afforded them for repentance and salvation!†

X.

CLAIMS OF THE FLESH.

Rom. viii. 12.—*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.*

It is of great importance for us to ascertain, not only the quality of particular actions, but the general princi-

* Rom. ix. 22.

† Preached on the morning of Sunday, October 31, 1814, at Leicester.

ple on which our life is regulated; since it is this that must determine our true character in the sight of God. As there are but two sorts of persons in the world, the righteous and the wicked, the carnal and the spiritual, so there are only two grand principles which respectively actuate these two classes of mankind, and produce all that diversity of character by which they are distinguished. In the context, they are characterized with such perspicuity and precision, that it is not difficult to decide to which we belong. The one are described as enslaved, the other as free; the one as being in the flesh, and "minding" the things of it; the other as inhabited and actuated by the Spirit; the former as the heirs of death; the latter as the joint-heirs with the Lord of a happy immortality. The text we have chosen for our present meditation, is a legitimate inference, deduced by the inspired writer from the premises he had been laying down; it is a conclusion at which he arrives, resulting from the views which he had been exhibiting of the condition and expectation of two opposite descriptions of persons. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

I shall endeavour in the first place to settle the meaning of the terms *flesh* and *Spirit*, employed in the context, in order to a right conception of the import of the proposition; and in the second place, compare and adjust the opposite claims of the flesh and of the Spirit.

1. Flesh most properly denotes the *body*, in contradistinction from the soul: the matter of which the corporeal structure is formed: "there is one flesh of men."* And,

2. As all men are possessed of this, it is by an easy figure of speech applied to denote human nature, or mankind universally. "The end of all flesh is come before God."†

3. Because the fleshly or corporeal part of our nature may be perceived by the eye, it is sometimes used to denote *that* in religion which is merely outward and

* 1 Cor. xv. 39. † Gen. vi. 13.

ceremonial. Thus St. Paul says, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect by the flesh?"* Thus the same apostle speaks of "carnal ordinances."†

4. On account of the deep and universal corruption of human nature, and this corruption displaying itself in a peculiar manner, in producing an addictedness to the indulgence of bodily or fleshly appetites, the term flesh is frequently used to denote moral corruption, or human nature considered as corrupt. It is manifest, from the consideration of the context, that this is the sense in which it is to be taken here. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;"‡ that is, corrupt and sinful. In this sense of it the works of the flesh are contrasted by St. Paul with the fruits of the Spirit. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."§ From the extent of the enumeration, which comprehends many mental vices, it is manifest nothing less can be intended by the term *flesh* than the principle of corruption, the dictates of unrenewed nature. By the *Spirit*, it is plain we are not to understand the immaterial principle in man, but the blessed Spirit of God, the author of all holiness. This is evident from the context.

Secondly. As they divide mankind betwixt them, and every man walks according to the dictates of the one or the other, they are considered as competitors. We shall examine and adjust their respective claims, that we may discern to which the preference is due, and come then fully to acquiesce in the decision of the apostle: "Therefore we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

There is an ellipsis in the text, which must be supplied from the train of thought in the context.

Let us examine the claims of the flesh, or of corrupt nature.

* Gal. iii. 3. † Heb. ix. 10.
‡ John iii. 6. § Gal. v. 19–21.

We may conceive the flesh pleading ancient possession. The pleasures and freedom from restraint attending a compliance with her dictates. The general usage and course of the world, which she reminds us has been such in every age. That the far greater part of mankind have been under her sway, the greatest of men not excepted, so that she can number nobles among her vassals, and among her subjects the princes of the earth. The most distinguished by their birth, their talents, or their fortune, she may allege, never dreamed of an exemption from her dominion, never thought of any other method of life, than that of living after the *flesh:* faithful to her dictates through the whole of their lives, they bowed submissive at her shrine, were initiated into her mysteries, and died in her communion. Notwithstanding these specious pleas, however, we shall see sufficient cause to decline her yoke, and to come to the apostolic conclusion, if we take the following things into our consideration.

I. Its claims are founded upon usurpation; they rest on no basis of equity. It alienates the property from its lawful possessor; it interferes with a prior claim, which nothing can fairly defeat. Sin, considered as a master, does not enter upon a property that is derelict or abandoned by its owner; but it attempts to occupy and appropriate what the proprietor never meant to resign, what he never can resign without irreparable injury to his honour. The souls of men are the most valuable part of his possessions below, and the most capable, indeed in one sense they alone are capable, of glorifying his perfections.

1. Let us consider that the Lord is our Maker, and we the work of his hands; it is "he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."* The noble powers, by which we are so highly distinguished from the inferior parts of the

* Isaiah xlii. 5.

creation, the powers of thought, and reason, and conscience, are of his production; from him they are derived, and by him they are sustained. His right in us is, consequently, more extensive than it is possible for us to conceive in any other instance, because none else ever gave existence to the smallest particle of dust in the balance; it is incomparably more than that, to which it is compared, of the potter over the clay. Whatever claim interferes, then, with his dominion over us, must be founded in absolute injustice, without the guilt of which it is impossible to withhold any thing from him; and it is injustice of the worst description, for it is robbing God, "Will a man rob God?" exclaims the prophet: "yet ye have robbed me, saith the Lord, in tithes and offerings."* But what are tithes and offerings compared to that love, adoration, and obedience, in which, even while they were enjoined, all their value consisted, and which are of perpetual obligation when they cease any longer to be enjoined? Nor does the dominion of God rest only on his power as a Creator; it claims our submission, also, on the ground of those transcendent perfections and excellencies which belong essentially to the blessed God, and the exercise of which is inseparable from his administration. By virtue of these, he is the sovereign good, the only good; for strictly speaking, "there is none good but God;" the infinite, the absolute, the unchanging, the satisfying, the all-comprehending good; so that whatever appears beautiful or glorious among the creatures, is but an efflux from his fulness, the faint reflection of his glory.

2. If we reflect on the powers with which we are endued, we cannot suppose that they are formed for no other end than the indulgence of carnal appetites, the amassing of riches, the enjoyment of sensual pleasures, or the procuring honours and distinctions from our fellow-worms. We shall be at no loss to perceive a strange disproportion between such powers and such pursuits, and that they cannot be confined to them without de-

* Mal. iii. 8.

scending unspeakably beneath our level, without a base forgetfulness of ourselves as well as of God, and a voluntary dereliction of our rank. Jeremiah, when he witnessed the ruin and desolation of his country, beheld with astonishment those that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills; a deplorable, but an involuntary degradation. But this we are now speaking of is chosen and voluntary; these dunghills, for such are the highest forms of created good when compared with the blessed God, are embraced with appetite and desire.

3. If God were disposed to relinquish his claim, the usurpation of another master might be yielded to with the more plausible pretence: but this is not the case. If we believe his word, he never means to part with his right over his creatures. "If I am a father, where is my reverence? if I am a master, where is my fear?"* We cannot suppose, without the utmost absurdity, he will ever divest himself of his authority; which he could never do without impairing his dignity and introducing confusion into his empire. He owes it to himself not to relinquish what we owe to him. The claims of the flesh, then, are founded on plain and direct usurpation.

II. Let us next examine the claims of the flesh by what we have already derived from it. Let us see whether it is such a master as deserves to be served any longer. Of the boasted pleasures it has afforded, say christians, what remains but a painful and humiliating remembrance? "What fruit had ye in those things of which ye are now ashamed?" Has any thing accrued to you from the service of sin, which you would wish to renew? Though it might flatter your imagination with the appearance of good, did it not afterwards "bite as a serpent and sting as an adder?" You remember the wormwood and the gall you were made to taste, when you were first convinced of its evil: and you know what a bitter and evil thing it is to depart from the living God. It has already brought you to the brink of de-

* Mal. i. 6.

struction; it has placed you in a situation in which nothing but the interposition of sovereign mercy could have saved you. By estranging you from God, it shut up the path to real good. In your unconverted state, it indisposed you to prayer, armed you with prejudice against the salutary truths of the gospel, darkened your understanding, and seared your conscience. Such was its deceitfulness, that you were led by it to put "evil for good, and good for evil; sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet." Your ears were closed to the voice of the charmer, charmed he never so wisely. You were made to fancy that true religion was melancholy, that tenderness of conscience was needless scrupulosity, and that happiness was only to be found in the pleasures and pursuits of this world. It engaged you in the chase of innumerable vanities. You "followed after your lovers, but could not overtake them;" fled from one refuge to another, till, to speak in the language of the prophet, "You were wearied in the multitude of your way." In the meantime, to all pleasant and delightful intercourse with the Father of spirits, to the soothing accents of peace and pardon issuing from Christ, and to all the consolations of piety, you were utter strangers. In your more serious and reflecting moments, your heart meditated terror; death, judgement, and eternity, were awful sounds in your ears, and you only felt a delusive and sickly repose, while you forgot they had any existence. On a calm review of your conduct, you felt an uneasiness, which you were conscious was so just and well founded, that you seldom dared to reflect. Surely you will acknowledge, that you, at least, are not debtors to the flesh. And what has the flesh to plead for its services, which will bear for a moment to be weighed against these great evils? What has Satan to plead, who, by means of it, "rules in the children of disobedience?" Will he venture to mention a few vain and sinful amusements, a wanton arbitrary liberty, or a few transient guilty pleasures, which, I trust, you are so far from wishing to repeat, that you never think of them

without blushing before God? How are you more indebted to the flesh, since you had reason to hope you formed a saving acquaintance with God? The partial indulgence to its dictates has robbed you of your comfort, has retarded your progress to heaven, and made you pass many a day sad and disconsolate, when, but for this, the joy of the Lord would have been "your strength."

The more we observe what passes around us with a serious mind, the more we shall be convinced how little men are indebted to the flesh. Look at that young man, the early victim of lewdness and intemperance, who, though in the bloom of life, has, "his bones filled with the sins of his youth." Survey his emaciated cheek, his infirm and withered frame, and his eyes sunk and devoid of lustre; the picture of misery and dejection. Hear his complaint, how he mourns at the last, now his flesh and his body are consumed: "How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me!—I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation of the assembly." Is *he* a debtor to the flesh? Behold that votary of the world, successful as he has been in the pursuit of it, and stained by no flagrant crime. Yet he has lived "without God in the world;" and now his days are drawing to a close, he feels himself verging to the grave, and no hope animates, no pleasing reflection cheers him. The only consolation he receives, or rather, the only relief of his anguish, is in grasping the treasures he must shortly quit. Is *he* a debtor to the flesh?

III. We shall examine the claims of the flesh by the aspect they bear on our future interests. Before we engage in the service of a master, it is reasonable to inquire into the advantages he stipulates, and the prospects of futurity attendant upon his service. In the ordinary concerns of life, we should consider the neglect of such an inquiry chargeable with the highest imprudence. Dreadful is it, in this view, to reflect on the consequences

inseparably annexed to the service of corruption, "If ye live after the flesh," says the apostle, "ye shall die"* "The wages of sin is death."† And, to demonstrate the close and unavoidable connexion subsisting between them, he adds, "If ye sow to the flesh, ye shall of the flesh reap corruption."‡ It is not an incidental connexion, it is an indissoluble one, fixed in the constitution of things. "Lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."§ If we live in the indulgence of carnal appetites, if we comply habitually with the dictates of corrupt nature; the word of God has assured us of what will follow: "The end of these things is death."‖ "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."¶ "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** For this reason we can never be debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; the very reason assigned in the clause immediately following the text. We can never be under obligations to obey such a master, who rewards his services with death; death, spiritual and eternal. The fruits of sin, when brought to maturity, are corruption: his most finished production is death; and the materials on which he works the fabric of that manufacture, if we may be allowed so to speak, consist in the elements of damnation. To such a master we can owe nothing but a decided rejection of his offers, a perpetual abhorrence, and an awful fear of ever being deceived by his stratagems, or entangled in his snares.

* Rom. viii. 13. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Gal. vi. 8.
§ James i. 15. ‖ Rom. vi. 21. ¶ Eph. v. 6
** Gal. vi. 7

XI.

ON THE CAUSE, AGENT, AND PURPOSE OF REGENERATION.

JAMES i. 18.—*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

IN this chapter the apostle endeavours to fortify the minds of the professors of christianity, under the various trials and persecutions to which their religion exposed them, by assuring them of the happy fruits, in their spiritual improvement, they might expect to reap from them here, and the more abundant reward which awaited them hereafter. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."*

Lest any might be induced to relax in their vigilance, under an idea that the circumstances of their trial were too arduous, and that if they shrunk in the combat they might excuse themselves from the consideration of its being disproportioned to their strength, and that they were, therefore, in fact, tempted of God, he takes pains to repel this insinuation, and to show, that the success of any temptation whatever is solely to be imputed to the unbridled corruption of the human heart. It is, he tells us, "when a man is drawn away by his own heart's lust, and enticed," that he is, "tempted;"† this sinful corruption has its origin in his own heart only; nor is it in the smallest degree to be imputed to God, as though he impelled to it by a direct agency, or so ordered things, in the course of his providence, as to render it unavoidable. The sum of his doctrine on this head appears to be this, that all evil is from ourselves, and from the disordered state of our hearts, on which temptation operates; while, on the contrary, all moral and spiritual good is from God, and "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* The communications of grace are emphatically denominated "good and perfect gifts," by way of asserting their immeasurable superiority to the blessings which relate to the present life; and of these gifts St. James affirms, that every one of them "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" Their origin is truly celestial: they are not capable of being communicated, like the good things of this life, by one human being to another; they are, strictly speaking, divine donations, which can only proceed from above. As a farther illustration of the proposition he had been laying down, he introduces the words of the text: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." These words instruct us in the cause, the instrument, and the end, of the renovation of christians.

* James i. 2, 3. † James i. 14.

I. The cause is "the will" of God;—God operating by a free and spontaneous agency. His grace imparted in regeneration must be acknowledged to be grace the most free and unmixed, the fruit of his sovereign will, in opposition to any necessity of nature to which it may be ascribed: for, though the nature of his agency cannot but be consonant to his character, though the fruit of his Spirit cannot but be most pure and holy, yet he was under no necessity to interpose at all. That the effect of his special operation on the hearts of the faithful should be sanctifying, is unavoidable; but his operating at all by his Spirit, in the restoration of a fallen creature, is to be ascribed solely to "his own good pleasure."†

It is of his own will, as opposed, not only to a necessity of nature in him, but to any claim of merit in the subject of this his gracious agency. No previous worthiness of ours, no attractive excellence in us, engaged his attention, or induced him to exert his power in our renovation: for whence could this arise in a creature so fallen and corrupt as to need so thorough a renovation? Or how, since "every good and perfect gift cometh from above," can it be supposed to subsist previous to, or apart

* James i. 17. † Phil. ii. 13.

from, his donation? In the context the apostle has been strongly insisting on it, that the beginning of all moral evil is to be ascribed to man; the beginning of all good to the Supreme Being; and it is in supporting this assertion he introduces the words of the text, "Of his own will begat he us."

No signs of virtuous and laudable conduct had ensued to procure the communication of divine grace, agreeable to what another apostle observes, in his epistle to Titus: "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

The production and maintenance of religion is styled by the same writer, "the good pleasure of his will."†

II. The instrument of this renovation is "the word of truth." In infusing the principle of divine life into the soul, God is wont to employ the gospel as the instrument, styled, with the utmost propriety, "the word of truth:" not only on account of the infallible truth and certainty of all its declarations, but on account of its high dignity and excellence, as a revelation from God, it is "the truth;" to which whatever is contrary is imposture, and whatever is compared to it insignificant.‡

It falls not within the limits of this discourse to illustrate, at large, the manner in which the word of God produces a saving change: two circumstances may suffice to establish the fact. The first is, that where the light of the gospel is unknown no such beneficial alteration in the character is perceived, no features of a renewed and sanctified mind are to be traced. The second is, that among those who live under the light of the gospel, the reality of such a change is less or more to be perceived, in proportion to the degree in which the gospel is seriously attended to, and cordially received. Every person who is deeply influenced by religious considerations, and enabled to live a holy and

* Titus iii. 5. † 2 Thess. i. 11. ‡ Gal. iii. 1.

spiritual life, will acknowledge his deep obligations to the gospel; and that it is to its distinguishing discoveries he is, under God, indebted for the renovation he has experienced. "Being born again," saith St. Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

III. We are directed to the consideration of the end proposed by this regenerating influence, "that we might be a kind of firstfruits of the creatures."

In the Jewish law, which was, in all its essential parts, a perpetual shadow of the gospel, the firstfruits of the earth were commanded to be dedicated in the temple, and presented by the priest as an offering to God: "The first of the fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God."† In the performance of this part of religious duty, an affecting form of words was prescribed, expressive of the humility and gratitude of the offerer.‡ When a vineyard was planted, the Israelites were forbidden to partake of the fruits for the first three years; during which it was to be looked upon as uncircumcised and impure: "And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the Lord withal."§

In allusion to this, the apostle observes, the design of

* 1 Pet. i. 23. † Exod. xxxiv. 26.

‡ "Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the *Lord* thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the *Lord* thy God shall choose to place his name there.

"And thou shalt speak and say before the *Lord* thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty and populous.

"And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O *Lord*, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the *Lord* thy God, and worship before the *Lord* thy God." Deut. xxvi. 2, 5, 10.

§ Lev. xix. 23, 24.

christianity is, that being received into the heart as a renovating principle, we may become in a spiritual sense, what the fruits presented in the temple were in a literal; "a certain first-fruits of his creatures:" in which representation, he meant, probably, to include the following ideas:—that we should be dedicated to God as holy persons, separated from every unclean use; that we should be distinguished as the most excellent part of his creatures; as the firstfruits were ever considered as the best of the kind; and that our dedication to God should be a pledge and [earnest] of the universal sanctification of the creatures.

1. This representation denotes our solemn dedication to God, as holy persons,—as persons set apart for his use and service. Christians are not their own, and the method by which God claims and appropriates them to himself is that of regenerating grace.

The principle of regeneration is a principle which prompts men to devote themselves to God. They in whom it is planted "present themselves a living sacrifice;"* as "a reasonable service," they present all their faculties and powers to him; their understanding, to be guided and enlightened by his truth; their will, to be swayed by his authority, and to be obedient to his dictates; their hearts and affections, to be filled with his presence, and replenished with his love; the members of their body, to be instruments of his glory, sacred to his use; their time, to be employed in the way which he directs, and in pursuit of the objects which he prescribes, and no longer according to the dictates of inclination and caprice. They feel, and cheerfully acknowledge, the obligations they are under to regard him as their God,—their owner and their Lord, through the Redeemer. They deprecate the thought of considering themselves under any other light, than as those who are "bought with a price;"† that, as God was highly honoured by presenting the firstfruits in the temple, since it was an acknowledgement of the absolute

* Rom. xii. 1. † 1 Cor. vi. 20

right over all things inhering in him, and that whatever was possessed was held at his pleasure, so he is much more honoured by our devoting ourselves, in proportion as the offerer is superior to the gift, in proportion as a reasonable creature is superior to unconscious matter. "They gave themselves," says St. Paul, speaking of the Macedonians, "first to the Lord;"* they gave themselves immediately to Jesus Christ as the great High Priest and Mediator, to be by him presented with acceptance to the Father, just as the basket of firstfruits was put into the hand of the priests, to be laid upon that "altar which sanctifies the gift."† It would have been great presumption for an Israelite to present his fruits without the intervention of the priest, as they were to be received immediately from his hands; so, in our approaches, we are to come first to the Mediator, and, in his name, to devote ourselves to God: "No man cometh to the Father but by him."‡

Though we are infinitely unworthy of the acceptance of so great King, yet, when we present *ourselves*, we offer the noblest present in our power, we offer that which has an intrinsic excellence, far beyond the most costly material gifts; we offer what has a suitability in it to the character of God; that which is immaterial, to the "Father of lights,"§ and that which is spiritual, to the "Father of spirits."‖ If he will deign to receive any tribute or acknowledgement at the hands of a fallen creature, as he has demonstrated his readiness to do through a Mediator; what can be deemed equally fit for this purpose with the solemn consecration of our inmost powers to him, in love, adoration, and obedience? A soul resigning itself to him, panting after him, and ambitious of pleasing him in all things, is a far more excellent gift than the numerous peace-offerings which Solomon, surrounded by a whole nation, presented at the dedication of the temple. Under the gospel he makes little account of other offering: the fruit which he

* 2 Cor. viii. 5. † Matt. xxiii. 19. ‡ John xiv. 6.
§ James i. 17. ‖ Heb. xii. 9.

demands is the fruit of our lips. By the Lord Jesus, therefore, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."* When the fruits were dedicated, the grant was irrevocable. The right to them passed fully and for ever from the offerer, so as to make it impossible for him ever to resume them again. Thus, when we have dedicated ourselves to God, the act is irrevocable; we must never pretend the least right in ourselves any more; we are to consider ourselves entirely the Lord's.

2. This "being a certain firstfruits of his creatures," denotes the superior honour and dignity which it is the gracious design of God to put upon christians. The firstfruits presented to God were not only required to be of the best, but they derived a preeminence above all others, from the very circumstance of their being dedicated to God; they were employed to a nobler use. Grace dignifies and exalts, in a similar manner, its possessor: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;" † however obscure in station, and however beclouded and depressed by the meanness of his external condition, he is one of the excellent of the earth. His employment is that of "a king and a priest unto God."‡ In reflecting some rays of his image, in advancing the honour, and sustaining the cause of the blessed God, he is infinitely more honourably occupied than the votaries of the world, or the servants of sin. His calling is "high and heavenly."§ He is associated with Jesus and the holy angels in sacred ministries, his pursuits are of a permanent and eternal nature.

If we consider the principles, also, which actuate good men and form the basis of their character, we shall perceive a greatness and elevation to which the world is an entire stranger. Is there nothing more noble in taking a wide prospect, and in looking at "the things which are unseen and eternal,"‖ than in being absorbed in tran-

* Heb. xiii. 15. † Prov. xii. 26.
‡ Rev. i. 6. § Heb. iii. 1
‖ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

sitory concerns? Is not that a higher species of wisdom which calculates upon the interests and advantages which lie concealed from eyes of flesh in the depths of eternity, than that which contents itself with securing perishing riches?

Is it not incomparably more noble and more worthy of an immortal creature to be "providing for himself bags that wax not old," "a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not,"* than in searching for "filthy lucre?" † Is there not more true dignity in the patience that waits with composure to be happy, than in the childish eagerness which catches at every momentary gratification? Is it not more magnanimous to conquer than submit to the world? to tread the world under our feet than to be enslaved by it? to be able to exercise that self-command over our sensual affections which secures the pleasures of innocence and the approbation of conscience, than to be the victim of unbridled passions? to rule our own spirit, than to be the sport of its tyrannical disorder? to rise above a sense of injury so as to forgive our enemies, rather than to be tormented with malice and revenge? He must be insensible to reason, who is at a loss how to answer these interrogatories; and to answer them in the affirmative is to attest the superior dignity of the christian character, to acknowledge that christians are "a sort of firstfruits of the creatures."

They are so at present, with all the imperfections which attach to their state and their character; but they will be incomparably more so, when they shall be assembled around the throne, and it shall be declared of them;—"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb." ‡

3. The representation of christians as a certain firstfruits of the creatures, implies the accession of the future harvest: they are a pledge only of what is to follow: their dedication to God as the firstfruits is a preparation

* Luke xii. 33. † 1 Tim. iii. 3. ‡ Rev. xiv. 4.

for the universal prevalence of religion,—the universal sanctification of the creatures.

Improvement.

I. Let us adore God for having planted in the breast a principle of true religion.

II. Let us be ambitious of exemplifying the excellence and dignity of our christian calling.

III. As an important means of this, let us study the gospel, and endeavour to gain a deeper and more extensive acquaintance with the word of truth.*

XII.

ON SPIRITUAL DEATH.

Eph. ii. 1.—*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

The power of God was most illustriously displayed in raising Christ from the dead; but there is another operation of divine power which bears a great resemblance to this, of which every individual believer is the subject. It is the prayer of the apostle, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, that the Ephesians might have an increasing experience of the effects of that power which is exerted towards "them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power:" and what particular effect of divine [power] he had in immediate contemplation, he informs us in the first part of the ensuing chapter: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." He had not merely raised Christ from the dead, but he had wrought a similar deliverance for the Ephesians, by imparting spiritual life to those who had been dead in trespasses and sins.

In treating of these words, I shall first inquire to what extent this representation of a death in trespasses and

* Preached 7th of March, 1811, at the Wednesday evening lecture.

sins is to be applied, and to what description of persons it belongs. Secondly, I shall endeavour to show its import:—and, thirdly, make a few remarks on the wretched state of those who may justly be affirmed to be dead in trespasses and sins.

May the Lord the Spirit apply the awful truths we shall have occasion to unfold, with power to the conscience!

I. Are those expressions, "dead in trespasses and sins," to be understood as applicable only, or chiefly to heathens? or to such in christian countries as have run very remarkable lengths in wickedness? or are they applicable to the state of the unconverted universally? The heathen, say some, were exceedingly corrupt and wicked, totally enslaved by idols, "without hope, and without God in the world." It was in consideration of this their remarkable alienation from God, and extreme corruption of manners, the apostle was led to employ such phrases; which are by no means to be applied to men educated in the light of christianity, although they may not yet be in a state of salvation. Whether the representation applies to heathens only, or to those in a christian country, who for their enormous sins may be justly compared to heathens; or whether they are to be applied to unconverted sinners universally, will perhaps sufficiently appear from the following considerations.

1. The apostle expressly includes himself among those whose former state he had been considering.* To the same purpose the apostle includes himself in the following description. "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."†

2. The same expression is applied generally to those who never were heathens. "And another of his disciples said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said, Let the dead bury their dead,"‡ the meaning of which is obvious. Let those who are spirit-

* Eph. ii. 3, 4. † Tit. iii. 3. ‡ Matt. viii. 22.

ually dead, who are therefore totally unqualified to serve me in the gospel, perform such offices as those, to which they are fully equal; but for thee, thou art fitted for a higher and nobler employment—go thou and preach the gospel.

3. It is the declared intention of Jesus Christ, by his appearance in our world, to give life to the world by exhibiting himself as the bread of life. "I am come that they might have life."* Here we have the affirmation of him that cannot lie; that those, whosoever they be that are destitute of saving faith, are also destitute of spiritual life. "They have no life in them;" † which can surely be understood in no other sense than what is equivalent to the passage before us.

4. True christians, without any exception, are described as persons who have "passed from death unto life."‡ "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but hath passed from death unto life."§ "Hereby we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death."||

Here the moral state of the world is supposed to be separated by an invisible boundary into two regions, a region of life and a region of death; and it is implied, that none come into the former, that is, that of life, but by passing into it from the latter. They were not natives of this blessed region, but migrated or travelled to it from an opposite one. And who are those remaining in a state of death? "He who loveth not his brother," that is, who loveth not christians as christians, which is certainly the character of all the unrenewed and unregenerate. We are justified, then, in applying this description—"dead in trespasses and sins," to every person who has not been renewed by the grace of God.

It is time to proceed, in the next place, to explain the import of this representation, or to unfold some of the leading particulars included in a state of spiritual death.

* John x. 10; vi. 32, 33. † John vi. 53.
‡ John v. 24. § Ibid. || 1 John iii. 14.

1. It implies a privation, or withdrawment, of a principle, which properly belongs, and once did belong, to the subject of which it is affirmed. It would be quite improper to speak of any thing as dead which was never endued with a living principle. We never speak of the inanimate parts of creation, such as earth and stones, as dead, because they are as they ever were; no living powers are extinguished in them. But from whatever once had life, when that life is withdrawn which it formerly possessed, we affirm that it is dead. Thus we speak of plants, of animals and men, when bereft of the vital principle, as dead. The death that overspreads the souls of the unregenerate consists in privations, in the withdrawment of what originally belonged to the soul of man, that gracious communication from God which is life. As the life of the body is derived from its union with the immortal spirit, and continues no longer than while that union subsists, so the life of the soul is derived from its union with God. Sin dissolved that union. In consequence of sin the blessed [God] withdrew from the soul, and the effect of that is, that though it is not deprived of its natural powers, as the body, even after death, still continues to subsist as matter; its life and happiness are gone.

The withdrawment of God is, with respect to the soul, what the withdrawment of the soul is in relation to the body. In each case the necessary effect is death; and as that which occasioned that withdrawment is sin, it is very properly denominated a "death in trespasses and sins." Now this view of the subject ought surely to fill us with the deepest concern. Had man never possessed a principle of divine life, there would have been less to lament in his condition. We are less affected at the consideration of what we never had, than by the loss of advantages which we once possessed. We look at a stone, or a piece of earth, without the least emotion, because, though it be destitute of life, we are conscious it was never possessed. But, when we look upon a corpse, it excites an awful feeling. Here, we are ready to reflect [and] say, dwelt an immortal spirit; those eyes were

once kindled, those limbs were once animated by an ethereal fire, and a soul was once diffused throughout this frame. It is now fled, and has left nothing but the ruins of a man. Did we view things in a right light, we should be far more affected still in contemplating a dead soul. Here we should remember, God once dwelt. The soul of man was once the abode of light and life. "How is the gold changed, and the fine gold become dim!" It is now overspread with carnality and darkness. It is now a lost, fallen spirit.

2. To be dead in trespasses and sins, intimates the total, the universal prevalence of corruption.

Life admits of innumerable degrees and kinds. There is one sort of vegetative life, as in plants, another subsists in animals, and in man a rational, which is still a superior principle of life. Where life is of the same sort it is susceptible of different degrees. It is much more perfect in the larger sorts of animals than in reptiles. The vital principle in different men exists with various degrees of vigour, so that some are far more animated, alert, and vigorous than others. But there are no degrees in death. All things, of which it can be truly said that they are dead, are equally dead. There are no degrees in privation; thus it is with all who are dead in trespasses and sins. They are all equally dead. They may possess very estimable and amiable qualities, such as naturally engage the love of their fellow-creatures; but, being equally destitute of a principle of spiritual life, they are all in one and the same state of death; they are governed by the same carnal principle; they are in the flesh, and therefore cannot please God.* They are alike subjects of the prince of darkness; they serve the same master, and belong to the same kingdom. Every unsanctified person is totally "alienated from the life of God,"—is totally devoid of love to Him, and a perception of his true glory and excellence. How can it be otherwise, when he is under the influence of that "carnal mind which is enmity against God?" † There are some

* Rom. viii. 8 † Rom. viii. 7.

sinners who are of so winning and gentle a disposition, that we are ready to flatter ourselves it is easy to conduct them to God, and to form them to the love and practice of true religion; but, when the experiment is tried, we soon find ourselves undeceived. Unless the Spirit of God pleases to operate, we find it as impossible to persuade them to seek the Lord by prayer, to mortify their corruptions, and set their affections on heavenly things, as persons of the most forbidding and unamiable tempers. We discover a rooted and invincible antipathy to whatever is spiritual. There are others who, by the influences of

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XIII.

ON CONVERSION, AS ILLUSTRATED BY THAT OF ST. PAUL.

Gal. i. 15, 16.—*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*

Of all the events which can befall us in this transitory state, there is none which deserves equally to be devoutly reflected upon with our conversion to God. This is an event by far the most important and the most beneficial. In looking back upon it, the strongest motives arise to humility, to gratitude, and to "a patient continuance in well doing." We find the holy apostle frequently adverting to it; always in terms that bespeak the lively impression the review of it made on his mind. In the case of St. Paul, there were many circumstances not paralleled in the general experience of christians; but in its essential features, in the views with which it was accompanied, and the effects it produced, it was exactly the same as every one must experience before he can enter into the kingdom of God.

As things of an internal and spiritual nature are best understood by examples, so we shall be at a loss, in the whole records of the church, to find a more striking and instructive example of the efficacy of divine grace in conversion, than that of St. Paul, to which he directs the attention of the Galatians, in the passage under present consideration. In this instructive passage he gives us a view of his conversion, in its causes, its means, and its effects.

I. Its causes. "He separated me from my mother's womb." Thus he styles [himself] "separated to the Gospel of God."* It is possible he may allude to the revelation to Jeremiah on his appointment to the prophetic office: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee to be a prophet to the nations."†

While he, Paul, was running a career of persecuting fury, the Saviour entertained designs of mercy towards him, agreeable to what he declared to Ananias:—"he is a chosen vessel to me to confess my name before nations, and kings, and the people of Israel."‡

We cannot suppose the purposes of God to be of recent date, or to have taken rise from any limited point of time. What he designs, he designs from eternity. Whatever he accomplishes is agreeable to his eternal purposes and word: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purposes and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began"§ Did he separate the apostle from his mother's womb? was he a chosen vessel? and must we not affirm [the same] of every one who is made partaker of the grace that is in Jesus Christ? Are not all genuine christians addressed as "elect of God," or chosen of God, "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ?"‖ Why should

* Rom. i. 1. † Jer. i. 5. ‡ Acts ix. 15.
§ 2 Tim. i. 9. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 2.

not the real christian give scope to those emotions of gratitude which such reflections will inspire? Why should he not adore that mercy which preserved him in his unregenerate state, spared him while in his sins and waited to be gracious?

The next cause, the more immediate one, to which the apostle ascribes his conversion, was his call by divine grace.

"Whom he predestinated, them he also called."* There is a general call in the gospel, addressed to all men indiscriminately. Gracious invitations are given, without exception, far as the sound of the gospel extends; but this, of itself, is not effectual. There is, in every instance of real conversion, another and inward call, by which the Spirit applies the general truth of the gospel to the heart.

By this interior call Christ apprehends, lays hold on the soul, stops it in its impenitent progress, and causes it to "hear his voice."

The methods of the divine operations in this inward and effectual calling are very various. Sometimes alarming and awakening providences are made use of for this purpose. The solemnities of death and judgement are forcibly presented to the attention: judgement appears nearly to commence, and the awful scenes of eternity appear near; the careless creature is awakened to perceive his guilt and danger, and is compelled to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?"—as when the earthquake, and the opening of the prison-doors, accompanied with unspeakable terrors, impressed the obdurate mind of the jailor, and made him fall down at the feet of his prisoners, trembling and amazed. Of the three thousand, at the day of Pentecost, we read, that "they were pricked in their heart." Others, like the eunuch, and Lydia, are wrought upon in a more gentle manner—drawn with the "cords of love, and the ties of man."

That there is such a change produced by the Spirit of God, will not be questioned by a diligent and attentive

* Rom. viii. 30.

peruser of the Scriptures: he will observe, the Spirit is always affirmed to be the author of a saving change; and the regenerate are particularly affirmed to be "born of God,"* "born of the Spirit."† In applying the term called, to such persons in a peculiar sense, we have the clearest authority of the Scriptures: "To them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."‡ "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called,"§ &c. This calling is by grace; "Who hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace."‖

II. The *means* by which conversion is effected: "Revealing his Son in me." The principal method which the Spirit adopts in subduing the heart of a sinner, is, a spiritual discovery of Christ.

There is an attractive force in the Saviour, when beheld by faith, which commands. Christ crucified possesses a drawing power: "When the Son of man is lifted up, he will draw all men unto him."¶ No radical and saving change is effected, without the exhibition of this object; nor are the terrors of the law alone ever sufficient for that purpose; they are sufficient to show the heinousness of sin, and the extreme danger to which the sinner is exposed, but have no tendency to produce a complete renovation. "By the law is the knowledge of sin:"** the law will discover our disease, but the knowledge of Christ is the discovery of the remedy. The law denounces its awful sentence: the discovery of Christ points out the method of deliverance and escape. The law at most is but a pedagogue, or "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." All saving influence and solid consolation springs from him, and from him alone. "The law kills," as the ministration of condemnation; it is "Christ who makes alive."

* 1 John iv. 7. † John iii. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 24. § Rom. viii. 28—30. ‖ 2 Tim. i. 9. ¶ John xii. 32. ** Rom. iii. 20.

The revelation of Christ is found in the Scriptures; but in conversion the Spirit removes "the veil on the heart," dispels prejudice, and affords that inward and divine light by which alone Christ is discerned to saving purposes. St. Paul speaks of Christ being revealed in him, in distinction from that external record of him which is contained in the word.

As there is an external call and an internal; the former universal, but often ineffectual; the latter personal, but always efficient; so there is an outward revelation of Christ and an internal, of which the understanding and the heart are the seat. Hence it is, with the utmost propriety, said to be a revelation "IN US." The minds of men, until they are renewed, resemble an apartment, shut up and enclosed with something which is not transparent; the light shines around with much splendour, but the apartment remains dark, in consequence of its entrance being obstructed. Unbelief, inattention, love of the world and of sin, and hardness of heart, form the obstructions in question. Let these be removed, and the discoveries of the word penetrate and diffuse a light and conviction through the soul: "The light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."* Thus it was with St. Paul before his conversion: his prejudices against the gospel were inveterate; his animosity violent and active; but no sooner was Christ revealed in him, than all was changed. The Spirit of God reveals the following things in Christ:—

1. His greatness and dignity. Men in their unrenewed state have very low and contemptible thoughts of Christ. Whatever complimentary epithets they may bestow upon him, they have in their hearts no [elevated] conception of him, but just the contrary: he is to them "a root out of a dry ground." St. Paul had the most mean thoughts of Christ previous to his conversion; but after that these mistaken views were entirely corrected. The majesty and power of Christ were exhibited to him with such effect, that he fell at his feet, exclaiming, "What

* John i. 5.

wilt thou have me to do?"* He was from that moment fully convinced that Jesus Christ had "all power in heaven and in earth," that he was seated at the right hand of God, and that he was in all respects that great and glorious person which the Scriptures represent him to be. His views were extended and enlarged; an interest in him appeared supremely valuable, his approbation supremely desirable. The knowledge of him appeared to be the most excellent knowledge.

2. The Spirit reveals his transcendent beauty and glory. The Scriptures speak much of the transcendent excellency of Christ, the perception of which has laid a foundation for that ardent attachment which the faithful have borne to him in every age. There is a surpassing beauty in the Saviour, which needs but to be perceived in order to eclipse every [other] object, and make it appear insipid and contemptible in the comparison. This beauty is visible in every part of the Saviour's character. In whatever light he is viewed, he is "fairer than the sons of men." "Grace is poured into his lips." "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, wherein they have made thee glad."† "Because of the savour of thy good ointments; thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee."

It is of him that Isaiah speaks, when he foretells the high esteem in which he should be held in a future age; "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely to them that are escaped of Israel."‡

3. The Spirit reveals the suitableness, fulness, and sufficiency of the Saviour, to supply all our wants and relieve all our miseries. The fitness of his offices [as Redeemer and Mediator] to our situation, and his complete competence to discharge these offices; the richness and perfection of that provision which there is in Christ is a principal part of what the Spirit reveals in conversion. In consequence, the soul is emboldened to venture

* Acts ix. 6. † Ps. xlv. 8. ‡ Isa. iv 2.

upon him, and, extinguishing all other hope and confidence to rely upon him alone. This is that reception of Christ which, whosoever gives, is entitled to the privilege of becoming the child of God.

III. We proceed to remark the effect of St. Paul's conversion. Immediately, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." He was not, "disobedient to the heavenly vision." He set himself, without hesitation or demur, to discharge the duties of his heavenly vocation.

1. His compliance with the will of Christ was instant, *immediate*, not like the eldest son in the parable, whom the father commanded to work in his vineyard.*

2. It was universal and impartial. He did not make choice and selection of the more easy duties and less costly sacrifices, but engaged in the service thoroughly and conscientiously. He spent his life in a series of most laborious, painful, and self-denying service, not living to himself. He spent his life in publishing the name of the Saviour who had been revealed in him.

3. His compliance was constant and persevering.

XIV.

ON THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

Acts xxvi. 9—18.—*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But*

* Matt. xxi. 28, 29.

rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

The conversion of St. Paul is one of the most extraordinary facts recorded in the sacred Scriptures; and, whether we consider it as affording a demonstration of the truth of christianity, or as illustrating the power of divine grace, it is deserving of most deep meditation.

So sudden a transformation of character as this narrative presents, must surely be acknowledged to deserve a thorough investigation by all who conceive the principles of human conduct a proper object of attention and inquiry. It is surely natural to look into the cause of such a change, as well as to consider the effects which it produced, and the issue to which it tended.

Every christian is so well acquainted with the sufferings and labours of this chief of the apostles, and has contracted so sacred a friendship with the name of Paul, that the circumstances which led to so great a revolution in his character, cannot fail to be interesting.

Let us, then, in dependence on divine assistance, take a review of the most striking particulars of this transaction, and endeavour to raise such reflections as the subject may naturally suggest.

I. Let us consider his previous character and conduct, and the actual state of his mind immediately before the change took place.

1. Of the incidents of his early life, we are not furnished with very full and distinct information. We learn that he was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, a city famous for its schools of philosophy, as well as for having given birth to some of the most eminent philosophers. His extraction, both on the side of his father and mother, was purely Jewish; but, owing to some benefit conferred on his ancestors, he was entitled by his

birth to the privileges of a Roman citizen. His education was learned; for he was born at Tarsus, and spent his first years there. He came at an early period to Jerusalem, and was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrim, and a celebrated doctor of the law. This was that Gamaliel who, by his temperate and judicious advice, restrained the violence of the Jewish council, who were determined to put Peter and John to death. His young disciple, Saul, seems to have imbibed nothing of his moderation, but to have been uniformly instigated by a most implacable fury against the christian cause. From his earliest youth he was of the "strictest sect of the Pharisees," who were not satisfied with complying with every punctilio of the Mosaic law, but adopted a multitude of traditions and ceremonies, of human invention, which they placed on the same footing, and deemed equally certain.

In common with the greater part of his countrymen, he held the perpetual and eternal obligation of the Mosaic law, and depended on his legal performances entirely for salvation. Though the sacrifices ordained under the law pointed to the atonement of Jesus Christ, he overlooked this reference; and, full of a confidence in his own rectitude, abhorred and disdained the idea of being indebted for salvation to a crucified Messiah. The poverty and meanness of Christ was an offence to his proud and haughty spirit; and the cross, which he endured for the expiation of sin, was a stumbling-block. He believed, no doubt, in a Messiah; but the person he expected under that character was a great and victorious prince, invested with secular pomp and glory; who was to break asunder the Roman yoke, and raise the Jews to the pinnacle of human greatness: and therefore, when he observed that Jesus was so far from accomplishing these hopes that he died the death of the meanest malefactor, he regarded him as a mean and detestable impostor. When he heard the apostles testify his resurrection, assure him that he was exalted at the right hand of God, and that salvation and the remission of sins were to be sought solely through his blood, his pre-

judices rose to the utmost violence; and he resented a doctrine which he considered as offering an insult to the whole Jewish nation. As he was taught to look upon the Jews as the distinguished favourites of the Most High, while he considered the Gentiles as reprobate and accursed; he abhorred the thought of that new doctrine which threatened to break down the "wall of partition," and to admit Gentiles and Jews to participate in the same privileges. He knew that the apostles were wont to denounce the judgements of God on the Jewish nation, for their rejection of Christ; and though they would naturally maintain a prudent reserve on the subject of their approaching calamities as a nation, they must have been well aware, from several of our Lord's parables, and particularly from his last prophecy, that the time was approaching when the temple at Jerusalem would be destroyed, its services abolished, the holy city trodden under foot, and the Jewish people be carried captive into all nations. It was some intimation of this kind, in the discourses of Stephen, which gave birth to the accusation—"We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." They set up false witnesses, which said, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." Under these impressions, Saul looked upon the christian sect as directly opposed to the dignity and perpetuity of the temple, the Mosaic law, and all the ceremonies and privileges by which the descendants of Abraham were distinguished from pagan nations.

All the prejudices of education, all the pride of a Jew, and the self-righteousness of a Pharisee, conspired with the violence of youth, and eager ambition to acquire the esteem of his superiors, and hurried him to the utmost excesses in opposing the cause of Christ. He seems to have devoted his life to one object,—the utter extirpation, if possible, of the christian name. When

Stephen was stoned, he was consenting to, or rather felt a pleasure in, his death; and so zealous did he appear on this occasion, that the witnesses laid down their clothes at his feet while they engaged in this work of blood. The death of Stephen was the signal of a general persecution, in which Saul appears to have taken a very active part: "As for Saul, he made great havoc of the church," saith St. Luke, "entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison."* Having received a commission from the high priest, he went on the same errand to Damascus; that if he found there any "of the same way" he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. During his journey he was revolving with delight the confusion and misery he should produce among the defenceless followers of Christ; and when he drew near enough to Damascus to take a view of the city, he no doubt exulted at the idea of being so near his prey. He feasted in the prospect of scattering the sheep of Christ, of dissolving their assemblies, and inflicting upon them the severest sufferings his malice could devise: "he breathed out threatenings and slaughter."† Little did he think of the change he was about to undergo;—little did he [anticipate] that astonishing scene of things which was about to be laid open to his view. He had hitherto confined his persecutions to Jerusalem and its immediate environs: he had now procured a more enlarged commission, which extended to a remote city. Damascus was nearly two hundred miles distant from Jerusalem. [It was in Syria; and was at that time under the dominion of Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa, a prince tributary to the Roman empire: under him was a governor who] permitted the interference of the Sanhedrim with the synagogues, [and greatly favoured those that persecuted the disciples of Christ.‡]

* Acts viii. 3. † Acts ix. 1.

‡ See 2 Cor. xi. 32; and Joseph. de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 25. The Romans, says Grotius, allowed the Jews the privilege of "apprehending and beating" not only with regard to the Jews of Palestine, but also out of Palestine, wherever there were synagogues that acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim in matters of religion.—Ed.

We cannot conceive a state of mind more unfavourable to Christianity, or less likely to issue in a cordial subjection to Christ, than that of which Saul was possessed at that moment. During a long journey, no misgivings of mind, no emotions of pity towards the innonocent objects of his resentment, nor the smallest hesitation respecting the propriety and rectitude of his proceedings, appear to have been felt.

Notwithstanding this, he was suddenly stopped in his career, and effectually diverted from his purposes. The means by which this was accomplished, the inspired historian distinctly relates. He was a "chosen vessel,"* and he was "separated, from his mother's womb."† The moment was arrived in which the gracious designs of God were to unfold themselves. But with what awful majesty is God pleased to attemper the dispensations of his grace towards guilty men! When he is pleased to show mercy, it is in a manner worthy of himself, in a manner most adapted to stain the pride of man, and to cause "that no flesh should glory in his presence." If the God, with whom we have to do, appears great and awful in the revelation of his mercy, what will he be in the execution of his justice in the finally impenitent? Hitherto we have witnessed the dominance of pride, bigotry, and passion, suffered to operate without control; we are now to contemplate the interposition of divine grace in abasing that pride, dispelling that prejudice, allaying the tumult of that passion. We shall see, in the instance before us, what methods the Lord Jesus adopted, more fully to apprehend the fugitive and the rebel; to soften his heart, and to make him become a willing captive at his feet: "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." ‡

* Acts ix. 15. † Gal. i. 15. ‡ Acts ix. 3—5.

In his speech before Agrippa, St. Paul relates the circumstance of the light shining round him, in the following manner: "At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them that journeyed with me." This light was not indebted to a surrounding obscurity for any part of its lustre: on the contrary, it shone forth at mid-day with a splendour that eclipsed the beams of a meridian sun. It was the light of [divine] glory which Saul beheld on this occasion; that light unapproachable, in which Jesus Christ continually dwells. It was of the same nature as that which St. John describes in his vision, when he says, "His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength." It was that light in which he will appear when he comes to judge the world, "and every eye shall see him."

Much as the prophets and apostles have said of the glory of Christ, it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception of it: the full revelation of it is reserved for a future state, when, if we are true christians, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."*

How short is the transition between this and the unseen world! How soon, when God pleases, can he transport his creatures into higher scenes of existence! It is but for him to draw aside the veil, and objects are presented to the view, compared to which, whatever is most admired on earth is mean and contemptible. Every moment we stand upon the confines of an eternal state, and, without dissolving the connexion between soul and body, God can open a passage into the "heaven of heavens." Why should we doubt of good men's being admitted into the more immediate presence of Christ at death, when we consider what Saul was permitted to see and hear before he was finally removed from this world? St. Stephen beheld the heavens open, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God; and Saul, in the transaction before us, was permitted to see that Just One, and to hear the words of his mouth. Along with

* 1 John iii. 2.

the light a voice was heard, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

This solemn question is replete with instruction. He does not condescend to reason with Saul; he enters into no vindication of his cause: with the dignity suited to his character, he expostulates and warns.

It deserves our attention, that he identifies himself with his disciples; he makes their cause entirely his own and considers what is done against them as against himself: "Why persecutest thou me?" Christ and believers, notwithstanding the immense disparity of their circumstances, are one. He is touched with a feeling of their sufferings; and, whatever insults or reproaches are offered to them for his name's sake, he feels and resents as done to himself. Let those who are tempted to insult and despise the followers of Christ, on account of their conscientious adherence to him, remember that their scoffs and insults reach higher than they may apprehend; they will be considered as falling on their Sovereign and their Judge.

Personal injuries it is impossible now to offer to the Saviour; but the state of our hearts towards him will be judged by our treatment of his followers: and he has warned us, that it were better a "millstone were hanged round our neck, and we buried in the depths of the sea, than that we should injure one of these little ones who believe on him."*

In answer to the inquiry, "Who art thou, Lord?" he replies, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." You will observe, he does not style himself here, the Christ, or the Son of God—"I am Jesus of Nazareth."† Jesus was the proper name of our Lord, a common appellation among the Jews; and the addition of *Nazareth* had usually been made as expressive of contempt. on contempt, He was usually styled "the Nazarene." Our Lord was determined to confound Paul by the meanest of his appellations; and resolved to efface the

* Matt. xviii. 6. † Acts xxii. 8.

ignominy attached to this appellation, and to cause himself to be adored by Saul under the very names by which he had been most vilified and contemned. "It is hard," he adds, "for thee to kick against the pricks." He compares Paul to the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, who, in order to free himself, wounds himself by kicking against the goads. Thus fruitless is all opposition to the cause of Christ. It will be injurious, it will be destructive to ourselves, if not desisted from; but can never eventually injure the cause against which it is directed. The heathen may rage, and yet "the Lord hath set his King upon his holy hill of Zion,"* and there he will for ever continue to sit.

To all who oppose him, he will prove a burdensome stone, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence."† "Whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."‡

To those who judge by the eyes of flesh, persecuting the servants of Christ may possibly appear a very easy task; but to those that remember who is engaged to be their Protector, it will appear in a very different light—it will appear the most dangerous employment in which they can be engaged.

The time will come, my brethren, when we shall perceive we might as safely have insulted the prince upon his throne, as persecuted Christ in the person of the meanest of his members.

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." How many Pontius Pilates and Herods, in different ages, has this crime doomed to destruction! We may trace the effects of it in the astonishing scenes that are now passing in the world. We may behold it in the subversion of thrones, and the misery and desolation of kingdoms. For, though the immediate instrument employed in inflicting these calamities is the insatiable ambition of an individual, they must in general be traced to higher sources—the unrepented crime of persecution. Who, that reads the prophecies, but sees that it is the weight

* Ps. ii. 6. † Isaiah viii. 14. ‡ Luke xx. 18.

of christian blood—the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, that now presses and weighs down the nations on the Continent, and makes them reel and stagger like a drunken man "They have shed the blood of saints and of prophets; and the Lord has given them blood to drink; for they are worthy."*

Let us guard against whatever approaches to this crime. If you will not walk in the ways of religion yourself—if you will not take the yoke of Christ upon you, at least be careful to abstain from vilifying and reproaching his servants. Respect the piety you are not disposed to imitate.

"What wilt thou have me to do?" He makes no stipulation; his surrender of himself is absolute; the words he utters are expressive of absolute submission. Such a surrender of ourselves into the hands of Christ, such a submission from us [also] is absolutely necessary.

He is directed what to do; and he complies punctually with the direction. "He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."† For a further account of our Saviour's address, see Acts xxvi. 16—18.

He was blinded by the light. (Acts xxii. 11.)

He gave himself up to solitude and prayer.

He would doubtless reflect on the following things:—

1. On what he had seen.
2. On what he had done.
3. On what lay before him.

XV.

THE LAMB SLAIN, THE OBJECT OF RAPTURE TO THE HEAVENLY HOSTS.

Rev. v. 6.—*And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.*

In the preceding chapter John is presented with a magnificent vision: a door is opened in heaven, through

* Rev. xvi. 6. † Acts xxvi. 19.

which he passes, and beholds the throne of God, and the Almighty sitting upon it. The several orders of creatures which make their appearance there, celebrate a solemn act of worship to him "which was, and which is, and which is to come, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

As the holy apostle was now on the point of being instructed in those mysteries of providence, whose accomplishment was to reach from the time of this vision to the consummation of all things, involving the remotest destinies of the church and of the world, so the manner in which it is imparted is such as must give us the highest idea of its importance. It formed the contents of a roll of a book, in the hand of him that sat on the throne, "written within and on the backside and sealed with seven seals."† The whole universe is challenged to furnish one who is capable of loosing these seals and exploring its contents. 'And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon."‡

The apostle, whose mind was inflamed with solicitude to be made acquainted with these mysteries, wept much at finding there was none worthy to loose the seals and to open the book. And one of the elders said unto him, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

Under this emblem, Jesus Christ is represented; alluding to the prophetic benediction of the patriarch Jacob—"Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre," he adds, "shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."§

* Rev. iv. 8, 10. 11. † Rev. v. 1. ‡ Rev. v. 2, 3. § Gen. xlix. 9, 10.

Judah was the regal tribe, and famous for its warlike exploits; distinguished by a succession of illustrious princes and conquerors, the descendants of David, who were at most but the forerunners and representatives of an incomparably greater personage, the Son of God; who, after he had vanquished the powers of darkness, was to be invested with an everlasting dominion, that all nations, tongues, and people should serve him.

While John was expecting to see some majestic appearance, he beheld, and, lo, a Lamb, with the marks of recent slaughter, presented himself before the throne, and he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on it: upon which, the several orders of creatures "fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."*

Emblems of weakness, of innocence, and of suffering, made part in a scene where [we might] suppose nothing to enter but unmingled grandeur. Nor are the sufferings of Jesus Christ in our nature merely indistinctly introduced; they are the principal objects presented to the view: they are made the basis of that wonderful act of adoration, in which every creature in the universe unites. The portion of scripture which I have selected for our present improvement, thus introduced, suggests the two following important observations.

I. That the distinguishing merit of Christ arises from his having redeemed us to God by his blood.

II. That this part of his character engages the attention and the adoration of the heavenly world.

I. That which distinguishes the character of Christ from all other beings, is his condescension for the salvation of men.

* Rev. v. 8—10.

1. The Scriptures uniformly teach us to look upon the death of Christ in a light totally distinct from that of any other person. Considered in itself, it is not at all extraordinary; for in every age we find examples of those who have sealed the divine truth with their blood. We learn from the New Testament that such was the end of Stephen, of James, of Paul, and of Peter. It is one of those trials which Jesus warned his disciples to expect; insomuch, that to be prepared at his call to surrender their lives was an inseparable condition of becoming his followers. But to none of their sufferings were such purposes assigned, such effects ascribed, as are uniformly ascribed to the sufferings of the Saviour.

"Precious," indeed, "in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints;" but it is never represented as having the remotest connexion with the remission of sins. They are never represented as set forth for a propitiation. Where is the death of Peter, or of Paul, spoken of in such language as this?—"He who knew no sin was made sin for us; that we might become the righteousness of God through him:"*—"He laid on him the iniquity of us all: the chastisement of our peace was upon him. and by his stripes we are healed;"† "He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification:"‡—not to mention innumerable other passages, equally clear and decisive? What language, that bears the least resemblance to this, is applied to any other subject? The great apostle speaks of Christ's dying behaviour as a part of his character which was altogether inimitable: "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"§

2. Accordingly, the inspired writers never mention the death of Christ without emotions of devout rapture. The prayer of Paul for his christian converts was, that they might "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."‖ It is the grand argument which they employ, to enforce the obligation of christians to love each

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † Isaiah liii. 5. 6. ‡ Rom. iv. 25.
§ 1 Cor. i. 13. ‖ Ephes. iii. 19.

other, "even as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour."* "Herein is love," John exclaims "not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and gave himself for us."† This love was the motive which, with a sweet but irresistible violence, impelled them to devote themselves entirely to his service. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then were all dead; and he died, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them."‡ As the morality of the gospel is distinguished from that of the world, by being founded in love; so the devout contemplation of the love of Christ is the grand principle which kindles and inflames it

3. When the great Ruler of the world was pleased to accomplish his secret purpose of reconciling the sinful race of man to himself, by the pardon of their sins and the renewal of their natures, he saw fit to appoint his Son to be their surety, to assume their nature, and to die in their stead; "Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh."§ Instead of endeavouring to explore all the secret reasons of this wonderful economy, it rather becomes us thankfully to accept, and devoutly to adore it. It is sufficient for us to perceive, that no method within our comprehension could have equally provided for the display, at once, of his justice and of his mercy; his spotless purity, and his infinite compassion. In making his Son the sacrifice, justice appears in its utmost splendour; while, in freely "giving him up for us all," mercy appears in its most attractive form.

The highest lessons of purity and holiness are learned at the foot of the cross; and if we are desirous of discovering an effectual antidote to the love of sin, it must be the serious and steady contemplation by faith, of Christ crucified.

4. Salvation through the blood of the Redeemer,

* Ephes. v. 2. † 1 John iv. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. § 1 Tim. iii. 16.

though it forms the distinguishing feature of the Christian system, was not peculiar to it. It entered into every dispensation of religion communicated by God. A multitude of types and figures were employed, to shadow forth the great expiatory sacrifice, previous to his manifestation in the flesh. He was the Paschal Lamb whose "blood sprinkled on the posts and lintels of the doors,"* secured the families of Israel from the destroying angel, in the night when God slew the first-born of Egypt: "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."† He was prefigured by all those burnt-offerings which were daily offered in the temple, and especially on the day of annual atonement, when the blood of the victim was carried by the high priest into the holy of holies. The goat that was slain on that occasion, and whose blood was presented before the mercy-seat, prefigured the vicarious death of Christ, and his entrance into heaven; the other, called the scape-goat, which, after having the sins of the congregation‡ * * * * *

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II. This part of our Saviour's character engages the attention and adoration of the heavenly world.

1. They adore this matchless display of love in his condescending to become man, to endure reproaches and sufferings, and at length to expire on the cross, to rescue the guilty from ruin. These benevolent spirits are not unaccustomed to perform kind offices for men: they often appeared, under the ancient economy, in visible form, to warn, to instruct, and to comfort; so they are still "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." But nothing which they ever performed bore any resemblance to the incarnation and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

On no other occasion did love ever stoop so low, endure so much, or operate in so free and spontaneous a manner. He who assumed nothing in making himself equal with God, "took upon him the form of a servant,

* Exod. xii. 7. 13. † 1 Cor. v. 7.
‡ Lev. xvi. 2, 20—34. Heb. ix. 7—15. § Heb. i. 14.

and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross."* In his mysterious descent, he passed by superior orders of being, to invest himself with human flesh. He who was the "Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father," condescended to become the "Son given," and the "child born." And never was humiliation so deep, never was there reproach and infamy so extreme, as that which he endured. Loaded with the most shameful appellations, and persecuted throughout the whole of his life, in its last scenes he was arraigned before Pontius Pilate, smitten on the face, derided, clothed with mock robes, buffeted, scourged, spit upon. Never were there such indignities heaped on any head, as on that which was destined to wear many crowns. And, for his sufferings!—who can contemplate that hour of darkness in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was overwhelmed with amazement and horror; or behold his lingering torments on the cross, without being appalled? It is a trial to human fortitude to be obliged merely to think of what he actually endured. And for whom? For the sinners of Jerusalem! for many of that infatuated multitude who were impatient for his crucifixion: for some, there is reason to believe, who were employed in nailing him to the cross! for a Saul, who was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against his followers: for millions of proud and daring offenders, whom this unparalleled love was to soften and disarm!

2. They contemplate and adore, in the death of Christ, a new display of the divine perfections. The wisdom and the power of God are every way manifest. His goodness may be traced in innumerable portions of his works. He had displayed his justice in the punishment of fallen angels, who were reserved in chains of darkness against the judgement of the great day. But there remained a new view of the divine character. God was pleased to present himself in a new light to the adoration of his creatures. He was pleased to show, in the

* Phil. ii. 7, 8.

same transaction, the most determined hatred to sin, with the utmost compassion to the sinner; the most inflexible adherence to rectitude, with the utmost riches of grace to the undeserving;—"a just God, yet a Saviour." He resolved to exhibit, in the person of his Son, a new spectacle to the universe: a person the most majestic, and the most humble; the most powerful, and the most compassionate; an authority, which should subdue to itself all "principality;"—a Saviour, who should "feed his flock like a shepherd;"—"the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

3. They rejoiced at the immense accession of happiness, which they perceived to flow from the death of Jesus Christ.

(1.) How safe is the worship of Christ!

(2.) How necessary to inquire how we stand affected toward the Saviour!

(3.) How much the supreme love of Christ, and a humble affiance in his merits, tends to prepare for the happiness of heaven!

XVI.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

PSALM cxlv. 11.—*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom.*

THE absolute dominion of God, as the universal Proprietor and Lord, is an object which deserves most devoutly to be celebrated. It is, in fact, the frequent theme of the praises dictated under the inspiration of the Spirit in the sacred oracles. But there is another of the dominions of God, considered in relation to his saints,—an empire of knowledge and of love, whose administration is entrusted to his Son,—which is celebrated in still sublimer strains, and forms the principal theme of the New Testament. This is emphatically denominated the kingdom of heaven, or that kingdom which the God of heaven should set up, given to "the saints

of the Most High," which is to be of everlasting duration, and never to be succeeded by another. Whether the Psalm before us is intended to describe this species of rule and authority, in distinction from the other, I shall not undertake to determine; but, as these divine compositions are unquestionably frequently employed in portraying the kingdom of Christ or the Messiah, it is hoped it will not be deemed improper to consider the words in that light.

Let us direct our thoughts, then, for a short season, to the glory of the kingdom of Christ. With this [view], it may be proper to reflect on the following particulars:—

I. The glory of it is manifest in its origin and the method by which it was acquired. It had its origin in ineffable mercy, under the direction of perfect wisdom and rectitude. It occupied the thoughts, and was the object of the counsels, of the Eternal, before the heavens were stretched out, or the foundation of the earth was laid. It formed the centre of the divine designs, and the ultimate point to which every other purpose of God was directed. As it was designed to be the spiritual reign of God over the mind, and at the same time to be a [unanimous, harmonious] kingdom, in which the sovereign and the subjects are always understood to be of the same nature, it was necessary, in order to its establishment, that God should become incarnate; it was necessary, not only for the redemption of his church, but also for the purpose of their being governed as they were intended to be governed. Ere the government could be placed "on his shoulder," * it was necessary for the Messiah to be "a child born and a son given."

Again, since in this kingdom the "tabernacle of God" was to be "with men," and he was to "dwell amongst them," † and such a condescension of mercy would have been utterly unbecoming the "blessed and only Potentate," ‡ without a single reparation to the divine honour tarnished by rebellion, it was requisite a sacrifice for sin

* Isaiah ix. 6. † Rev. xxi. 3. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 15.

should be made, worthy of the occasion, which could no where be procured but by "the offering of the body of Christ, once for all." * The inefficiency of the typical sacrifices under the law proclaimed the necessity of one of intrinsic validity and infinite value. Thus the foundation of this empire was laid in the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God; and the solidity and extent of its foundations, great as they are, are but proportioned to the majesty and duration of the edifice.

"Every battle of the warrior," says the prophet Isaiah, "is with confused noise, and with garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning, and fuel of fire." † The kingdom of which we speak is acquired by conquest, but of a nature totally different from military conquest. The weapons employed in achieving it are purely spiritual—the burning of conviction, the light of truth, the fire of love. The simple testimony of Christ, the publication of the gospel by the "foolishness of preaching," have produced the most wonderful changes in the world, far beyond those which have been effected by violence or the sword. Before these simple but efficacious instruments, the powers of darkness have been overcome; "Satan has fallen like lightning from heaven;" ‡ temples have been overturned, oracles have been struck dumb, the arm of persecuting power has been withered; and men have, in every part of the world, passed through chains, and racks, and fires, into the kingdom of God. Heavenly truth, love, and wisdom have grappled with all the powers of falsehood and sophistry, combined with all the blandishments and terrors of the world, and have gained decisive victory. From the smallest beginnings, and by the most contemptible instruments to human appearance, the gospel, by "commending itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God," § hath triumphed over all opposition, and is still going forth "conquering, and to conquer." ‖

It is thus the Spirit of God addresses the Messiah, in

* Heb. x. 10. † Isaiah ix 5. ‡ Luke x. 18.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 2. ‖ Rev. vi. 2.

portraying his success in the establishing of his empire: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty: And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."* Truth, meekness, and righteousness are the weapons of his warfare, and the rod of his strength. They "shall be willing in the day of thy power;" they are a conquered, yet a willing people; they submit to his power, but cheerfully and gladly embrace his sceptre: their will itself is so changed, their hearts so touched, that they become "like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." †

Other potentates extend their empire by force, and by imposing their yoke on reluctant necks; Jesus Christ by love, and by exhibiting a matchless example of condescension and [mercy.]

2. The glory of this kingdom is conspicuous in the principles by which it is administered. Of this Prince it is truly said, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."‡ The sceptre of his dominion is grace: grace displayed in the gospel, grace communicated by the Spirit, is the grand instrument of maintaining his empire. He reveals his glory and imparts his benefits, and thereby attaches his subjects by ties at once the most forcible and the most engaging.

A lovely assemblage of qualities characterises the spirit and genius of his divine administration; an incomparable majesty, united to a most endearing condescension—a spirit of benignity, joined to impartial justice, distinguishes his conduct. Though the subjects of this kingdom are admitted to it on no other condition than a cordial approbation of the character of the Prince, they

* Psalm xlv. 3—5. † Cant. vi. 12. ‡ Isaiah xi. 3—5.

are not left lawless or uncontrolled; the revelation of the divine will is imparted; the most perfect measure of holiness, and rules of conduct, are enjoined on the conscience and impressed on the heart. This administration exhibits, throughout, a beautiful model of the moral government of God, attempered to the state of creatures who have fallen from their original rectitude, but are under a dispensation of mercy. A system of paternal justice is carried into execution throughout this empire; in consequence of which the disobedient are punished that they may not be condemned with the world. The gradations of favours are regulated by the Sovereign with the most impartial justice; and future rewards distributed [with exquisite propriety and rectitude.]

Human administrations extend only to outward actions, and are conducted entirely by external and visible instruments. Were we not united to a fleshly fabric, they would be incapable of reaching us: so that they extend more properly to the bodies than to the souls of men. The dominion of Christ is chiefly spiritual and internal; the soul is the subject of his authority, where he dwells by faith. It extends to the remotest sentiments of the mind, "casting down high imaginations, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* It is not the object of our outward senses; it is within us, consisting not in "meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." †

The benefits which human governments impart are principally of a negative kind, consisting in the removal of those checks and restraints which the unreasonable passions of men urge them to impose on each other's enjoyments. The utmost that the wisest earthly government can, for the most part, effect, is to overawe the mischievous, to * * * * * *

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II. It is glorious with respect to the manner in which it is administered: "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be

* 2 Cor. x. 5. † Rom. xiv. 7.

just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light when the sun ariseth, even as a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining after rain."*

The most essential quality in a virtuous administration, is justice. This property is most conspicuous in the government of Christ over his people. He confers no benefit upon them but what is compatible with the strictest rectitude, having previously made a sufficient atonement for their transgressions. And in every part of his administration, "righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."† With perfect equity he apportions the degrees of his favour to the respective measures of their attachment and obedience. He will render to such of his subjects rewards, not properly on account of their works, but "according to their works."‡ He employs the pure and holy law of God, as the invariable rule of their conduct, and shows how to make such a use of its terrors and sanctions, as is subservient to his gracious designs; restraining by fear those who are not susceptible of more liberal and generous motives. As it first convinced them of sin, so it is, in his hands, the instrument of such convictions as the measure of their offence may require; and, by alarming and awakening the conscience, it excites to repentance, vigilance, and prayer: "As many as I love, I rebuke," is his language; "be zealous therefore, and repent,"§ "for I have not found thy works perfect before God."‖

His dominion is at the same time most gentle, gracious, and benign. Grace, as I have said, is the sceptre of his empire; and that grace is imparted by the Spirit. His reign is indeed "the reign of grace."¶ He reveals his glory, he manifests ineffable majesty and beauty, whereby he captivates the hearts of his subjects, and "draws them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love."** With the most tender compassion he "delivers

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4. † Isaiah xi. 5. ‡ Matt. xvi. 27.
§ Rev. iii. 19. ‖ Rev. iii. 2. ¶ Rom. v. 21.
** Hos. xi. 4.

the needy when he crieth, the poor, and him that hath no helper. He spares the poor and the needy, and saves the souls of the needy:"* "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."†

In earthly kingdoms the subjects are governed merely by general laws, which are, of necessity, very imperfectly adapted to the infinite variety of cases that occur. The combinations of human action are too numerous and diversified to be adequately included in any general regulation or enactment; whence has arisen the maxim, "*Summum jus, summa injuria*,"—that a strict adherence to the letter of the law would often be the greatest injustice. But this divine dominion subsists under no such imperfections; for the Prince is intimately acquainted with the secrets of the heart. He also pervades every part of his empire by his presence, and can, consequently, make a specific and personal application to each individual; can impart his smiles and his favours, the expression of his kindness or of his displeasure, to each individual soul, as distinctly as though it were the only subject of his empire.

In human government the law extends to outward actions only, but the good and the evil which are produced by it are almost entirely confined to sensible objects—to such objects as bear a relation to our corporeal state.

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* Psalm lxxii. 13. † Isaiah xli. 17, 18.

XVII.

ON SPIRITUAL LEPROSY.

LEV. xiii. 45.—*And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.**

BY superficial thinkers, it has been objected to several parts of the Mosaic law, that its injunctions are frivolous and minute, and of a nature that ill comports with the majesty and wisdom of the Supreme Being. The exact specification of the different sorts of sacrifice, the enumeration of the different sorts of creatures, clean and unclean, and the various species of ceremonial defilement, have been adduced as examples of this kind. To this it may be replied, that, at this distance of time, we know too little of the superstitions among pagan nations, and consequently of the peculiar temptations to which the ancient Israelites were exposed, to enable us to form an accurate judgement respecting the expediency or necessity of those provisions. Many legal enactments, which appear unreasonable and unnecessary to a distant observer and a remote age, on close investigation of the actual circumstances in which they were, are discovered to be replete with propriety, and to be founded on the highest reason. But the most satisfactory answer to this, and to most other objections raised against the law of Moses, is derived from a consideration of the peculiar nature of that institute, which was throughout figurative and typical. In the infancy of revealed religion, and when the minds of men were but little accustomed to refined reflection, it became necessary to communicate moral and religious instruction by actions and observances, and to address their reason through the medium of their senses. The people of Israel, at the time they came out of the land of Egypt, having been long surrounded by idolatry, and in a state of depression and

* Preached at Leicester, December, 1810.

slavery, were a people, we have the utmost reason to believe, of very gross conceptions, deeply sunk in carnality and ignorance; a nation peculiarly disqualified to receive any lasting impression from didactic discourses, or from any sublime system of instruction. Their minds were in an infantine state; and divine wisdom was imparted to them,—not in that form which was best in itself, but in that in which they were best able to bear it: and being very much the creatures of sense, religious principles were communicated through the medium of sensible images. Thus they were reminded of the eternal difference betwixt right and wrong, betwixt actions innocent and criminal, by the distinctions of animals and meats into clean and unclean. Their attention was called to a reflection on their guilt, on their just desert of destruction, and of the necessity of a real expiation of sin hereafter to be made in the person of the Saviour, by the institution of sacrifices, without the shedding of whose blood there was no remission. To convince them of the inherent defilement attached to sin, and of the necessity of being purified from it by a method of God's devising, it was enjoined that several incidents, such as touching a dead body, the disease of leprosy, and some others, should be considered as polluting the person whom they befell; in consequence of which, they were pronounced unclean, and separated from the camp and the tabernacle. In allusion to the ceremonial uncleanness contracted by touching a dead body, St. Paul, that infallible interpreter of the import of the Mosaic law, styles evil dispositions "dead works."—"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"*

To every instance of ceremonial defilement, there are two circumstances attached.

* Heb. ix. 13, 14.

1. The forfeiture of certain privileges, especially that of approaching God in his sanctuary.

2. A representation of the defiling nature of sin.

But of all the various sorts of ceremonial uncleanness, there is none which appears to have had so much a typical import as the case of leprosy, which, accordingly, occupies more room in the enactments of the Levitical law than all the others put together; and is treated of with a niceness of distinction, and a particularity of detail, peculiar to itself. Not less than two very long chapters of this book* are devoted to the ascertaining of the signs of this disease, and prescribing the methods of legal purification; so that no one, who believes there is any thing whatever of a typical nature in the laws of Moses, can doubt of the regulations respecting leprosy being emphatically so. It is my full conviction of this which has induced me to make it the ground of this discourse. If we set ourselves to inquire for what reason the leprosy was selected in the Mosaic ritual, as the most eminent representation of moral defilement, we shall perceive there was something very singular in this affair. Besides its being fitted for this purpose as it was a very dreadful and loathsome disease, there is the utmost reason to believe it was supernatural. Those who have travelled into eastern countries make mention, indeed, of a distemper under the name of leprosy; but there is much room to doubt of its being the same which is treated of in the books of Moses. If you read the rules prescribed there for ascertaining its existence, you will find certain circumstances to which there is nothing parallel in any disease now existing in the world: for it attached itself not only to the bodies of men but to garments and to houses; it affected the very stones of buildings, fretting and consuming them.† A considerable part of the laws on this subject respect its subsist-

* Lev. xiii. xiv.

† Read carefully Lev. xiv. 34—45. Michaelis, and others, have endeavoured to prove that the leprosy of the Old Testament is, in no case, supernatural; but their reasonings are, in my judgement, far from satisfactory.—Ed.

ence in houses, which in certain cases were ordered to be completely demolished, and the materials cast into an unclean place without the city. It seems to have been inflicted by the immediate hand of God: "When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession," the Lord is introduced as saying, "and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession; and he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house."* In various periods of the Old Testament history, we find it inflicted as an immediate judgement of God; as in the case of Moses, Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah. After it was cured, it was suffered sometimes to spread again. By this awful visitation, the inhabitants of the house were forcibly reminded and admonished of their sins: and is it possible to conceive of a ceremony more adapted to strike a stupid and insensible people with awe?

The typical import of this kind of ceremonial defilement leads us to consider sin in the following lights:—

I. As an alarming, dreadful disease, for such the leprosy unquestionably was. There are spiritual diseases, as well as bodily, and the former much more to be dreaded. These diseases may all be resolved into sin. As the human frame consists not merely in a number of parts put together in the same place, but of parts vitally united, all with their separate functions and due subserviency to each other, which gives us the idea of a system; so the mind consists of faculties and powers designed to act under due subordination to each other. Sin disturbs this harmony, confounds this order, and consequently is truly and properly in the mind what disease is in the body. In the Holy Scriptures it is compared to the most afflicting disorders;—to blindness, deafness, lethargy; and the removal of it is expressed by healing. "Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should

* Lev. xiv. 34, 35.

heal them."* Sin is a fretting leprosy; it spreads itself throughout all the principles and powers; and [wherever it spreads imparts its own malignity.]

II. It defiles as well as disorders.—Like the leprosy it is a most loathsome disease; it is *filthiness* of flesh and of spirit. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."† "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."‡

III. It cuts off those in whom it prevails from communion with God, both penally and naturally; that is, by the force of judicial sentence, and by its natural influence.

IV. To those who have just apprehensions of it, it will be productive of that sorrowful sense of guilt and unworthiness, so forcibly expressed in the words of the text.

XVIII.

ON SPIRITUAL LEPROSY.

Lev. xiii. 45.—*And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.*§

In this discourse, we propose to make an improvement of the former, which treated of the spiritual import of the Mosaic law concerning lepers. Having shown that the ceremonial defilement, incurred by leprosy, was designed as a standing representation of the polluting nature of sin, and the legal method of purification,—a type of the manner in which the power and pollution of sin are removed under the gospel,—I shall proceed to attempt applying the whole doctrine to the character and circumstances of my hearers.

1. Let the doctrine be improved into an occasion of

* Isaiah vi. 10. John xii. 40. † Psalm xix. 12. ‡ Psalm li. 2.
§ Preached at Leicester, December, 1810.

inquiring whether *we* are healed, or are yet under the leprosy of sin. When we hear of the ravages of so dreadful a disorder, supposing we give any sort of credit to the report, it is natural to inquire into our own situation, and to consider how far we are in danger of being overtaken with it. During the prevalence of an epidemic disorder, accompanied especially with symptoms of danger, prudent men are wont to manifest great solicitude to avoid the places and occasions of infection. In the case before us there is ground for much serious inquiry peculiar to itself. The leprosy of sin is not like some other disorders which affect some individuals alone, while others escape; it is a universal malady,—no child of Adam escapes it; it attaches to the whole human race; and the only persons who are not now involved in that calamity, are such as are *cured*, *saved*, redeemed from among men;—terms which in their most obvious import imply the former prevalence of disease. The bitter fruits of human apostasy extend to each individual of the human race, as may be sufficiently inferred from the very appellation of Christ, the Saviour of the world, "he shall be for salvation unto the ends of the earth,"* as well as from the most express declarations of scripture respecting the universal prevalence of guilt and corruption, in all instances where it has not been counteracted and controlled by divine grace: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."†

Since this is the case, if you are not now in a *state* of sin, yet as you were so formerly, you have undergone a great change, and must consequently have some recollection of the circumstances attending it; and though you may not perhaps be able to specify the precise moment of your conversion, some traces must remain upon your memory of the circumstances connected with an event so replete with important consequences. In the course of

* Acts xiii. 47. † Eph. ii. 3.

our discussion on this subject, we have observed, that the cure of sin must be preceded by a sense of the malady, by a humiliating conviction of defilement, urging us to cry with the leper, "Unclean, unclean." Did any ever witness in you this appearance of concern for sin, this apprehension of your misery as a guilty creature before God? Were you ever heard, we will not say to cry out in a public assembly, as did the three thousand that were converted by Peter, but in the most private intercourse with a christian friend, and inquire what you must do to be saved? Are you conscious to yourselves of having ever felt serious and lasting solicitude on that head? Did it ever rest with a weight upon your mind at all proportioned to what you have felt on other occasions of distress? Was it ever allowed to put a check to your worldly amusements, to your gay diversions, or to the pursuit of any scheme whatever, from which you could promise yourselves profit or pleasure?

We will take occasion, in treating on the subject before us, to observe that the only method of deliverance from the malady of sin is a devout and humble application to the Lord Jesus; for he, and he only, "shall save his people from their sins;"* and now, not less than in the days of his flesh, it is his prerogative to say, "I will; be thou clean."† Supposing you thus to have applied, and to have succeeded in your suit, you must have some remembrance of those solemn transactions betwixt Christ and your soul. You can recall the season when you committed yourselves into the hands of the Redeemer; when, like the leper in the gospel, you fell at his feet, crying, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Your struggles after the Saviour, your attempts to believe, accompanied with prayer that he would help your unbelief, and the rest you have found in him after being tossed by the storm, cannot all have passed like the fleeting images of a dream, without leaving some traces in your mind not easily effaced. If you are conscious that nothing of this nature has taken place, if you re-

* Matt. i. 21. † Matt. viii. 3.

collect no such transactions, you may be assured they never took place.

Waving, however, these points of inquiry, and admitting it to be possible that all this may have disappeared from your mind, still, since sin is a universal malady from which none are naturally exempted, if you are now healed, you must be conscious of your being very different from what you formerly were. Admitting you can give no account of the circumstances or time of your cure, yet you can at least say with him in the gospel, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Your taste, inclination, and pursuits, must have undergone a great alteration; and, whereas you were formerly alienated from God, and took no delight in him, he is now your avowed and deliberate end, your chosen portion. Whereas you were formerly utterly disinclined to prayer, it is now your constant practice, and considered as a high privilege. "Led captive" formerly "by Satan at his will," borne away by the tide of sensual inclination or corrupt example, you now feel yourselves endowed with spiritual power, so as to overcome temptation; and, having the seed of grace remaining, you keep yourselves that so "the wicked one toucheth you not." The Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to you formerly "like a root out of a dry ground, without any beauty or comeliness in him for which you should desire him," is now in your eyes "the branch of the Lord, beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the earth, comely and pleasant." The knowledge of him, instead of being tasteless and insipid, you now find to be of [such] high and superlative excellence, that you account all things but loss in the comparison; nay, you esteem them "but dung that you may win Christ." You feel, it may be, some remains of your ancient distemper; but you feel at the same time that its power is broken, that the prescriptions of your physician have wrought kindly, and that you are not far from a complete cure.

But if you are conscious of being strangers to all this, you may rest assured your disorder remains in its full force. Nor let any flatter themselves that things are well

with them because their external conduct is decent and regular, and they are exempt from the grosser acts of immorality, while they remain alienated from God, forgetful of his presence, unawed by his authority, insensible to his goodness, strangers to his converse. In this alienation lies the very core and essence of sin; this is the "evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God;" this is the radical distemper, of which the diversified forms of iniquity in men's lives are but the symptoms and effects. This aversion to God, this inaptitude to be influenced by considerations and motives derived from his blessed nature and holy will, is the seminal principle of all wickedness; it is the [universal,] the pervading malady, which attaches to apostate spirits, as well as to apostate men, and the only one of which disembodied spirits are capable; and which [leagues] the disobedient and rebellious in all parts of the universe in one grand confederacy against God and goodness. Till this is subdued, nothing is in reality done towards the recovery of lost souls. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart;"* and, in consequence of this, that which is highly esteemed among men is, not unfrequently, an abomination in his sight. "There is," the Scriptures tell us, "a generation who are pure in their own eyes, but are not washed from their filthiness;"† and they who value themselves on the correct exterior of their conduct, while their heart is not turned to God, are precisely that generation.

II. The second improvement to which the subject naturally leads, is a reflection on the misery of those who are yet under the power and defilement of sin. Happy should we esteem ourselves, could we impress upon the consciences of such, an adequate idea of their misery. "Then said" the prophet "Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the

* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † Prov. xxx. 12.

Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean."*

To be under the power and pollution of sin, is to be odious in the sight of God; and what inexpressible degradation is comprehended in this idea! For the eye of God's holiness to be averted from us, to have no share in his complacency, to be in a situation in which his essential attributes are engaged for our destruction, is a conception, which, if you come to realize it, is replete with horror. To have "the wrath of God abiding on you" is a calamity which, one would suppose, must drink up your spirit, and completely destroy whatever satisfaction you might naturally derive from other objects. Till this plague is removed, cheerfulness is folly, and laughter is madness. However prosperous your outward condition, however successful your worldly pursuits, however ample your fortune, or elevated your rank, they are no just occasion of joy to you, any more than the garland which decorates the victim prepared for slaughter. "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God."† There are many circumstances calculated to afford a degree of joy; the blessings so plenteously showered down on the path of life, are adapted in themselves to exhilarate the heart, and to diffuse a ray of cheerfulness over the soul; but to him that is under the wrath of the Almighty, if they afford high gratification, it must be in consequence of his forgetfulness of his true situation. We should pity the insensibility of the man who could delight himself with the dainties of a feast, while a sword was suspended over his head by a single hair;‡ the danger of whose situation is however, not to be compared with being every moment exposed to "the wrath of God." While you continue in your sins, you have not the shadow of security against overwhelming and hopeless destruction: at

* Haggai. ii. 13, 14. † Hos. ix. 1.

‡ See Horace, lib. iii. carm. 1.

"Districtus ensis cui super impia
Cervice pendet, non Siculæ dapes
Dulcem elaborabunt saporem."—Ed.

any moment, in the midst of your amusements, your business, your repose, whether at home or abroad, in company or in solitude, you are liable to the arrest of justice; to be cast out into that eternal prison, from whence you can never escape "till you have paid the uttermost farthing." The Being that fills with his presence the immensity of space—the Being "in whom you live, and move, and have your being," who can crush you in a moment, and who has engaged to recompense his enemies, and "reward them that hate him," is incensed at you, and laughs at your insensibility, because he knows that your hour is coming.

III. The subject before us suggests the strongest motives for an immediate application to the methods of cure. Were sin a tolerable distemper it might be endured; were it entirely or in every sense incurable, it must be submitted to. But as things are actually situated, there is no necessity for you to pine away in your iniquities; for, though you cannot recover yourselves by any native unaided power of yours, though in this light your [hopelessness] be deep, and your wound incurable, yet there is a method of recovery revealed in the gospel, which millions have tried with success. "There *is* balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there."* By the discoveries it makes of the placability of the Divine Being, and the actual constitution of a Redeemer, the gospel is essentially a restorative dispensation. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,"†

We have observed, in the course of our discussion of this subject, that the evils attached to sin are twofold: guilt, which is a legal obstruction to an approach to God, and renders the sinner liable to eternal death; and pollution, which disqualifies him for happiness.

To the former, the blood of the Redeemer, "sprinkled upon the conscience," is a sovereign antidote: "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."‡ The great design of his coming into this world, was to render that

* Jer. viii. 22. † Rom. i. 16. ‡ 1 John i. 7

reparation to divine justice for the injury it had sustained by the transgressions of men, which it had been otherwise impossible to make; and thus, in consistency with the divine law, to admit repenting sinners to mercy. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near."*

With respect to the power and pollution of sin, its efficacy in retaining the soul in bondage; this also admits of relief in the gospel. There is a Spirit, we have often occasion to remind you, which can liberate the soul, and diffuse freedom, light, and purity through all its powers. "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death."† "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."‡ If you are willing to be made clean, if you sincerely implore the savour of divine grace, it will not long be withheld from you. "He will give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him."§ "If you will turn at his reproof, he will pour out his Spirit unto you, and make known his words unto you."‖ "He is willing to heal your backslidings, to receive you graciously, and love you freely."¶

If you are so much in love with your distemper, indeed, as to determine, at all events, not to part with it, your case is hopeless; and nothing remains but for you to die in your sins, under the additional guilt you incur by refusing the remedy which Infinite Wisdom has prepared. At present, God is expostulating with you, in the language of an ancient prophet, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"** "Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?"††

You have met with many occurrences calculated to

* Heb. x. 19—22. † Rom. viii. 2. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 17.
§ Luke xi. 13. ‖ Prov. i. 23. ¶ Hos. xiv. 4.
** Jer. iv. 14. †† Jer. xiii. 27.

bring your sin to your remembrance: in various respects, God has walked contrary to you, and has probably often visited you with severe chastisements. Your bodies have been reduced by sickness, your families visited with death; and under some of these strokes you were for a while stunned, and formed some feeble resolution of forsaking your sins, and devoting yourselves to a religious life. But what are the fruits? No sooner was the first smart of your affliction [abated,] than you returned to your course, and became as inattentive to the concerns of your soul as ever. God only knows, whether he will grant you any more warnings; whether he will wait upon you any longer; whether he will ever again visit you in mercy; or whether he will pronounce on you that awful sentence recorded in Ezekiel:—"Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God."*

XIX.

ON COUNTING THE COST.

LUKE xiv. 28.—*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

AMONG the many excellencies which distinguish the character of our Lord, as the author and founder of a new religion, we perceive, throughout the whole of his conduct, a most transparent simplicity and candour. He disdained, on any occasion, to take advantage of the

* Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

ignorance or inexperience of the persons with whom he conversed; never stooping to the low arts of popularity, nor attempting to swell the number of his followers by a concealment of the truth. He availed himself of no sudden surprise, no momentary enthusiasm arising from the miracles which he wrought, or the benefits which he conferred. The attachment which he sought, and which he valued, was the result of mature conviction, founded on the evidence of his claims, and combined with a distinct foresight of the consequences, near and remote, which would follow from becoming his disciples. Conscious of the solidity of the foundation on which his title to universal and devoted obedience rested, he challenged the strictest scrutiny. Knowing that his promises would more than compensate all the sacrifices he might require, and all the sufferings to which his disciples might be exposed, he was not solicitous to throw a veil over either; but rather chose to set them in the strongest light, that none might be induced to enlist under his banners, but such as were "called, and chosen, and faithful." He felt no desire to be surrounded by a crowd of ignorant and superficial admirers, ready to make him a king to-day, and to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," to-morrow; but by a band, "whose hearts God had touched," prepared through good and evil report to follow him to prison and to death. Such, with the exception of one, were his twelve apostles; such the hundred and twenty disciples who were assembled at Jerusalem after his ascension; and such the character of those whom he will acknowledge as his at a future day.

Let me request your serious attention, while, in dependence on divine assistance, we attempt the improvement of this passage, by showing,

I. What is the *cost* attending the Christian profession.

II. Why is it necessary to *count* the cost; and,

III. The reasons which ought to determine our adherence to Christ, whatever that cost may be.

I. We are to consider the *cost* of the christian profession. The cost attending [this profession] relates, either to what it requires us to renounce; or what we

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I. We are to consider the *cost* of the christian profession. The cost attending [this profession] relates, either to what it requires us to renounce; or what we

are to expect; or the term and duration of the engagement.

1. In order to be the disciples of Christ, there is much that we must instantly renounce. It is a profession of *holiness:* it, therefore, demands the immediate renunciation of criminal and forbidden pleasures. The moment we become Christ's disciples, we commence a warfare with the flesh, engaging for its crucifixion, with all its sinful lusts and appetites. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."* To the severities of monastic discipline, in which the body is torn by scourges, and emaciated by abstaining from the nourishment required to sustain it in health and vigour, the religion of Christ is a stranger. "For every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving."† But a soft, voluptuous, and sensual life, is repugnant, not only to the example of Christ, but to the whole genius and spirit of his institutes. By his gospel, and by his Son, God has "called us, not to *uncleanness*, but to holiness;"‡ so that he that despiseth the precepts of purity, despiseth not man, but God: "This is the will of God, even our sanctification, that every man should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, as the Gentiles which know not God."§ However painful the sacrifice of forbidden gratifications may be, however deep and inveterate the habit of indulgence; though it may seem as necessary to us, and as much a part of ourselves, as the right hand, or the right eye; relinquished it must be, or we cannot be Christ's disciples. A life of sinful pleasure is not the life of a man, much less is it the life of a christian; "He that liveth in pleasure" (it is the language of inspiration) "is dead while he liveth."‖ Let me urge every one present to count the cost in this particular, and if he is not firmly determined, in the strength of divine grace "to abstain from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul," let him not pollute the

* Gal. v. 24. † 1 Tim. iv. 4. ‡ 1 hess. iv. 7.
§ 1 Thess. iv. 3—5. ‖ 1 Tim. v. 6.

name of the holy and immaculate Lamb of God by associating it with his own. Such an association is his abhorrence, which he will testify in a future day; and he will vindicate his insulted purity by a final renunciation and disclaimer, saying, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity: I never knew you."*

2. The christian profession is *spiritual*, and therefore requires the renunciation of the world. The words of our Lord in this particular are decisive. "So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple."† In the interpretation of these words, we must undoubtedly distinguish between the spirit and the letter. In the ordinary circumstances of the christian profession, a literal compliance with this requirement would lead to pernicious consequences; to a relinquishment of the duties proper to our station, and a disorganization of society: but still they have an important meaning. They present the relation of a disciple to the present world in a very solemn and instructive light. They intimate, at their lowest estimate, that the relation he bears to the present state and world, is that of "a stranger and pilgrim;" that the relation in which it stands to him, is that of an entire and absolute subordination to the glory of Christ and the interests of eternity. At the first opening of the gospel dispensation, the sacrifice of all secular advantages, the disruption of the tender ties which connect parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and the dearest friends, was not unfrequently the inevitable consequence of an adherence to Christ. The necessity of literally forsaking all was a usual appendage of the Christian profession. There was therefore a great propriety in placing the engagements of a disciple in this strong and forcible light, which, however, prescribe nothing more than what is irrevocably binding on us under similar circumstances. To regard every worldly interest, at all times, with an attachment subordinate to the love of Christ; to treasure up our chief happiness in him, and to be willing to "for-

* Matt. vii. 23. † Luke xiv. 33.

sake all," whenever the following him renders it necessary; are absolutely essential to the becoming his disciples.

On this ground, my christian brethren, let each of us try our religious pretensions. If you wish to carry into the christian profession the weight of worldly incumbrance, a heart corroded by its passions, and agitated with its cares; if you are desirous of uniting the service of God and of Mammon, and think of presenting to Christ a few small relics of your time, occupied in the cold formalities of a dead and heartless religion, you cannot be his disciples. The world must be displaced from the throne, or Christ will not, cannot, enter; since he will never condescend to occupy a subordinate place. Alas! what multitudes are there, (there is reason to fear) who are fatally deceived in this particular; and who, while they form a high estimate of their character as christians, have not "the Spirit of Christ," and are therefore, "none of his!"*

3. In order to be a disciple, it is necessary, in the concerns of conscience, to renounce every authority but that of Christ. The connexion of a christian with the Saviour is not merely that of a disciple with his teacher; it is the relation of a subject to his prince. "One is your Master, even Christ."† "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me."‡ In the whole course of our lives, if we are indeed his disciples, we shall evince our allegiance by a conscientious observance of his laws, by an implicit submission to his will, together with a sincere desire of ascertaining more and more of his mind and purpose. "We shall call no man master upon earth," nor dare to trifle with the least of his injunctions; and while we plead the merits of his death and the perfection of his righteousness as the alone ground of hope, we shall reverence him as a Sovereign, who is entitled to that spiritual, that interior, obedience of the heart, which is suited to the character of him who searches it. He who trusts in him as his Saviour, must obey him as his

* Rom. viii. 9. † Matt. xxiii. 8. ‡ John x. 27.

Lord; nor shall any be washed in his blood who will not submit to his sceptre.

The moment Paul was brought to a saving acquaintance with Christ, he wrought in him a most profound sense of his majesty; a most humble and reverential submission to his will. His proud, intractable heart melted like wax before the sun, till, passive and subdued under the hand of Christ, he exclaims, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" While you prefer submission to any other yoke, while the dictates of any other authority have more power over you than the precepts of Christ, dream not of being his disciples. It is absolutely impossible.

4. The cost of which we are speaking relates to what we are to expect. In general, to commence the profession of a Christian, is to enter upon a formidable and protracted warfare; it is to engage in an arduous contest, in which many difficulties are to be surmounted, many enemies overcome. The path that was trod by the great Leader, is that which must be pursued by all his followers. If *he* found his way strewed only with flowers, if *his* career was cheered with acclamations and greeted with smiles, you may not unreasonably indulge in like expectations. But if his course, on the contrary, was a course of trial and effort, of affliction and discouragement; if a life of poverty and suffering, closed by a death of ignominy and agony, form the principal features of his history, regulate your expectations accordingly. "It is sufficient for the servant to be as his Master, the disciple as his Lord." "If they call the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household." "Marvel not," saith our Lord, "if the world hate you; it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."* "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, that in me ye might have peace."†

* John xv. 18, 19. † John xvi. 33.

Though violent persecution is not an event, under the present circumstances of the christian profession in this country, within the range of probability, yet serious and painful opposition may be expected. Vigorous attempts will be made to deprive you of your crown, at one time by an assault on your doctrinal, at another, by efforts to corrupt your practical, principles. A strong current will set in from the world to obstruct your progress, swelled by the confluence of false opinions, corrupt customs, ensnaring examples, and all the elements of vice, error, and impiety, which are leagued in a perpetual confederacy against God and his Christ. Your path will often be beset, not merely by the avowed patrons of error, but by such as "hold the truth in unrighteousness;" who, never having experienced the renovating power of divine truth, will be among the first and foremost to ridicule and oppose its genuine influence. While you live like the world, you may, with impunity, think with the church: but let the doctrines you profess descend from the head to the heart, and produce there the contrition, the humility, the purity, the separation from the world which distinguish the new creature, that world will be armed against you. "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."* In order to stand your ground, it will be requisite for you to "quit yourselves like men, and be strong." Aware that he is everywhere, and at all times, surrounded with danger, the life of a christian is a life of habitual watchfulness; in solitude, in company; at home, abroad; in repose and in action; in a state of suffering, or a state of enjoyment; in the shade of privacy, or in the glare of publicity. Aware of his incessant liability to be ensnared, he feels it incumbent on him to watch. The melancholy history of the falls of Noah, of David, and of Peter, is adapted and designed to teach us this lesson.

An opportunity may present itself, perhaps, in your future course, of growing suddenly rich, of making, at

* 1 Pet. iv. 4.

least, a considerable accession to your property; but it involves the sacrifice of principle, the adoption of some crooked and sinister policy, some palpable violation of the golden rule; or, to put it in the most favourable light, such an immersion of your mind in the cares and business of the world, as will leave no leisure for retirement; no opportunity for "exercising yourself unto godliness;" no space for calm meditation, and the serious perusal of the Scriptures. Are you prepared, in such a conjuncture, to reject the temptation; or are you resolved, at all events, to make haste to get rich, though it may plunge you into the utmost spiritual danger? "Count the cost;" for with such a determination you cannot be Christ's disciple.

By the supposition with which we set out, you have solemnly renounced the indulgence of sinful pleasures. But recollect that Siren will return to the charge, she will renew her solicitations a thousand and a thousand times; she will sparkle in your eyes, she will address her honied accents to your ears, she will assume every variety of form, and will deck herself with a nameless variety of meretricious embellishments and charms, if haply at some one unguarded moment she may entangle you in those "fleshly lusts which war against the soul." "Count the cost." Are you prepared to shut your eyes, to close your ears, and to persist in a firm, everlasting denial?

You will meet with injuries, and unjust provocations: "count the cost" in this respect.

5. The cost of the christian profession stands related to the *term* and duration of the engagement—"Be thou faithful unto death." It is coeval with life.

II. Why, we say, is it expedient for those who propose to become christians to "count the cost?"

1. It will obviate a sense of ridicule and of shame. (See the context.)

2. It will render the cost less formidable when it occurs.

3. If it diminishes the number of those who make a public and solemn profession, this will be more than re-

trieved by the superior character of those who make it. The church will be spared much humiliation; Satan and the world deprived of many occasions of triumph.

III. The reasons which should determine our adherence to Christ, notwithstanding the cost which attends it.

1. His absolute right to command or claim our attachment.

2. The pain attending the sacrifices necessary to the christian profession greatly alleviated from a variety of sources.

3. No comparison betwixt the cost and the advantages.

XX.

PARALLEL BETWEEN THE WAR WITH THE CANAANITISH NATIONS, AND THAT OF BELIEVERS WITH THEIR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.*

JOSHUA v. 13—15.—*And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay: but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.*

JOSHUA was at this time entering upon a most arduous undertaking; that of attacking the nations of Canaan, at the command of God, with a view to put the Israelites in possession of that land which God had sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, he would bestow on their posterity. Joshua had just been invested with the office of the leader of the chosen people in the room of Moses, who was dead; he had witnessed their frequent rebellions against his predecessor, who had claims to

* Preached at Leicester, March, 1814.

their obedience peculiar to himself; and he had great reason to apprehend, that the spirit of perverseness and insubordination, which occasioned so much uneasiness, would burst out against him with additional violence. Added to this, the enterprise on which he was entering was, in itself, extremely difficult and formidable.

The miraculous appearance presented to him on this occasion was probably intended to obviate his fears, and to arm him with an undaunted resolution in accomplishing the arduous duties assigned him. It is generally agreed by the most judicious commentators, that the personage who presented himself to Joshua at this time was no other than he who afterwards became incarnate, —"the Son of God," "the Angel of the Covenant," and "the Captain of our salvation." From his commanding Joshua to pull his shoes from off his feet, assuring him the ground whereon he stood was holy, he could not fail to infer, that he who addressed him was a divine person; these being the identical words addressed to Moses when God appeared to him in the burning bush.*

We may learn, from various passages in the New Testament, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in his pre-existent state, presided over the Jewish nation, conducted it through the wilderness, and communicated that spirit of inspiration by which its succession of prophets was actuated.

It is to those divine manifestations of himself in the ancient church, there is reason to believe, St. Paul refers, when, contrasting the pre-existent state of Christ with his appearance while on earth, he attributes to him the form of God, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."†

Nothing can be conceived more adapted to support the mind of this great man of God, and enable him to encounter every obstacle with fortitude, than such a divine manifestation; by which he was assured the Son of God himself undertook the conduct of the war, and the discomfiture of his foes.

* Exod. iii. 5. † Phil. ii. 6.

The certainty of God being engaged on their side is, in every age, the chief support of the christian Israel, in the conflict they are called to sustain with their spiritual enemies.

The present state of the church of God is justly styled a militant state, which is the chief distinction between its present and future condition. An everlasting victory is in prospect, when all enemies will be placed under its feet. In the mean while, whoever belongs to the true Israel of God is engaged in the serious and momentous contest, which bears, in many points, a striking and designed resemblance to the wars which the tribes of Israel, under the conduct of Joshua, waged with the inhabitants of Canaan.

As I conceive, if we attempt to trace a resemblance, it may possibly minister to our instruction and improvement, I shall confine the following discourse to that point.

I. The war in which the tribes of Israel were engaged was of divine appointment. It was a holy war,—not originating in the enmity or ambition of the people who undertook it, but in the sovereign will and pleasure of God, who had promised, ages back, to put them in possession of the land of Canaan; but resolved, for the wisest ends, that the actual possession of it should be the fruit of conquest.

The warfare in which christians are engaged, in like manner, is of divine prescription; it is one to which they are solemnly called. The enemies they are called to combat are God's enemies; and it is his will that we shall yield ourselves as instruments in his hand for their destruction.

In resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil, we are executing his commands, and are consecrating our services to the Most High. To be resolute and determined in this warfare, is to enter into the very essence of our christian calling; and it is the principal test of our fidelity and allegiance to the King of kings. Our Saviour has distinctly exhibited them in his word, has set us in

battle array against them, and says to us, These are my enemies, and also yours, and you must destroy them.

While we remain in a state of unregeneracy, we are scarcely aware of the existence of these enemies. We have no apprehension of danger, and consequently seem to ourselves to be in a [region] of peace and safety. But no sooner are the "eyes of the understanding enlightened," than a new scene presents itself, and we perceive ourselves to be encompassed with foes, and are at once convinced that no representation of the christian calling is more just than that which likens it to a warfare.

II. The nations of the Canaanites, whom the Israelites were commanded to expel, were extremely numerous and formidable. So they appeared to the spies who were sent by Moses to search out the land. "The land," say they, "floweth with milk and honey: nevertheless, the people be strong, and the cities are walled, and very great: and we saw the children of Anak there. We be not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we; all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature; and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were, in our own sight, as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."*

Moses himself frequently reminds the Israelites of the obligations they will be under to love and serve God, when he shall have "subdued under them nations stronger and more numerous than they."

Here we may infer, with certainty, that there was naturally no proportion betwixt the strength of the Israelites and that of the people they were appointed to subdue. The victory to which they aspired was not to be achieved by their own power;—they were encouraged by the assurance that the Lord would fight for them,—which is abundantly verified in the events recorded in the book of Joshua. Thus the enemies which obstruct our salvation are numerous and formidable, far

* Numb. xiii. 27, 31—33.

exceeding our active powers of resistance; so that we could entertain no hope of success, were we abandoned to our own unassisted efforts.

Who could flatter himself with the expectation of vanquishing the assaults and escaping the snares of his great adversary; quelling the motions of the flesh, and overcoming the temptations of the world, if he had no hope of superior succour? Never were forces brought into the field more unequally matched, than the power and subtlety of Satan, enforced by the influence of the world and the treachery and corruption of our own hearts, and the naked, unaided efforts of a feeble worm.

When we consider the perfect subjection to which the far greater part of mankind are reduced under these their spiritual enemies, and the havoc and destruction they are continually making of souls, we shall be convinced of the propriety of scripture language, when it speaks of "the powers of darkness:" "To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." These enemies have triumphed over the greatest potentates, have held in invisible chains the greatest of men, and tyrannized, with little or no resistance, over those who have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

III. God was pleased to assign to the people of Israel a leader, who, under God, was to marshal their forces and direct their operations. The name of this great captain was, by divine authority, called Joshua, his original name was Hoshea; but when he was marked out for the office he afterwards sustained, it was changed into JOSHUA, by inserting one of the letters of the tetragram, or the incommunicable name, into his, to denote his partaking of the Spirit, and being invested with a portion of the authority of God.

The word *Joshua* imports a Saviour, and it is precisely the same in the Hebrew with that which was given to our Saviour, because he was to "save his people from their sins."

Under the conduct and command of this great captain, it was that the people of Israel were to expect victory,

and to him they were commanded to pay implicit obedience.

In leading the church militant, Jesus Christ, who is by name and by import the true Joshua, is appointed to the supreme command; and one of the most distinguishing characters under which he appears, is that of "the Captain of our salvation."* He said to Joshua, "as captain of the Lord's host am I come," and he is set up and proclaimed as the great antagonist of Satan, and of the powers of darkness; and it is only under his auspices, and in consequence of being strengthened and sustained by him, that we can indulge the hope of victory.

His "grace is sufficient for us; his strength is made perfect in our weakness."† "I can do all things," said St. Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me."‡ He is given as a "leader and commander to the people."§ He appeared to John in the Apocalypse, under the character of leader of the hosts of God. "And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse; and he that sat thereon was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war: and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations."‖

From him supernatural succours are derived to all who are enlisted under his banner. "All power is given to him in heaven," for the express purpose that he may give eternal life to all his followers; and if "the sun stood still in Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon," the whole course of nature is under the control of Christ, and all the operations of Providence are rendered subservient to the salvation and victory of his church. And christians are not dismayed at the powers and number of their adversaries, [so long] as they realize the character of their Leader, who is able to make them "more than conquerors."¶

* Heb. ii. 10. † 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‡ Phil. iv. 13.
§ Isaiah lv. 4. ‖ Rev. xix. 11—15. ¶ Rom. viii. 37.

As it is frequently remarked in the history of the conquest of Canaan, that the Lord fought for Israel, so it may be equally affirmed at present with respect to the church of God.

IV. The war with the Canaanites was a *bellum internecinum*—a war which was never to be terminated but in the destruction of the inhabitants. Having exhausted the patience of God, by their crimes and impieties, he was resolved to cut them off, and was pleased to employ his chosen people as the instruments in accomplishing the purposes of his justice. Hence they were strictly prohibited from making any league or truce with them, or seeking their peace or prosperity in any shape whatever. How often are they admonished with respect to the duty of declining affinity with them, and of contracting any social ties!

The character of this war was peculiar to itself, in its not being intended to recover violated rights, or to procure indemnity for past injuries, or security against future; but to vindicate the cause of God against the incorrigible, and to exhibit them as examples of divine retribution. Regard to the interests of those who engaged, was not the only or the prevailing principle of this war. In all these respects it exhibits a striking figure of the warfare the church of God is called to maintain with its spiritual enemies.

Like that waged with the Canaanites, no suitable measures are to be relaxed, no idea of concession or treaty admitted, no thought indulged of future amity and reconciliation. Our eyes must not pity, nor our hands spare; no tenderness must be indulged towards our spiritual enemies, no thought admitted but of pursuing them to destruction. We are to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;"* to mortify, or in other words, put to death, our members that are in the earth, to endeavour that "the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we shall not serve sin."†

As the children of Israel were forbidden to inquire in

* Gal. v. 24. † Rom. vi. 6.

what name the Canaanites had served their gods, and were not to take their name into their lips; so christians are to have no commuuion with the "unfruitful works of darkness," but to "reprove them," while "fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, which is idolatry, are not to be so much as named amongst them. as becometh saints."* Every fibre of corruption is, if possible, to be extirpated, every part of the old man to be laid aside, "old things" universally renounced, and "all things to become new." Hostilities are never to cease till the enemy perishes out of the land.

V. Though God could easily have destroyed the Canaanites at once, though he could have crowned [his people] with immediate and decisive victory; yet he chose rather to do it, as he informs them by Moses, "by little and little."

He adopted this method to exercise more fully their faith and patience. "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. By little and little will I drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land."†

For wise and mysterious ends, in like manner, he permits his church to attain but a gradual victory. It is by slow degrees, and by a long succession of conflicts, tha conquest is achieved; the force of the enemy is gradually weakened, and it is long ere the church is permitted completely to rest from its toils.

VI. To suffer our spiritual enemies to remain unsubdued, is uniformly productive of effects analogous to those which the Israelites were warned to expect from sparing the Canaanitish nations. "They shall be as pricks in your eyes, and goads in your sides, because you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you. Then it shall come to pass that those which ye let remain of them shall be as pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover, it shall come to pass, thar

* Eph. v. 3. † Exod. xxiii. 29, 30.

I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them."* It is one thing to suffer our enemies to remain unmolested, and another to commiserate their existence.

There are seasons when the christian, overdone with continual opposition, is ready to yield himself to the love of ease, and, relaxing in his opposition and vigilance, permits the enemy to gain some advantages; but if he hopes thereby to procure lasting tranquillity, he is greatly mistaken. There is that irreconcilable hatred between the principle of grace and the principle of corruption, between the new and the old man, Christ and Satan, that nothing is gained by an attempt to compromise their differences, or amicably to adjust their claims.

Our spiritual enemies are never capable of being softened by indulgence, of becoming neutral, much less of being converted into friends. They will be incessantly plotting our destruction, and watching for our unguarded moments, in order to catch every possible advantage of us; and the only safe way is [for us also] to be always on the watch, always distrustful of them, and hostile.

The people of Israel might have rid themselves much more completely of their enemies, had they availed themselves more diligently of their first advantages. Afterwards their enemies were suffered to remain for their trial.†

VII. The people were dismayed at the report of the spies; a lively resemblance to the conduct of too many who set out towards the heavenly Canaan, but in the contest suffer themselves to be dismayed.

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* Numb. xxxiii. 55, 56, &c. † Judges ii. 2, 3, 21—23.

XXI.

ON THE LAW OF GOD IN THE HEART.

PSALM xxxvii. 31.—*The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

THE temporary prosperity of the wicked, has in every age afforded a trial to the faith and patience of the righteous. Often are they doomed to behold the contemner of God "flourishing like a green bay tree," abounding in sensual pleasures and luxurious enjoyments, and elated with pride, as though the world were made only for them; while such as fear his name are crushed under the rod of power, and subjected to the greatest privations and sufferings. Such is the scene of providence, a scene which appears to have given birth to the composition of this psalm, in which the impatience and discontent which such a spectacle is apt to occasion are corrected, the brevity of the worldly prosperity of the wicked is foretold, and the final happiness and triumph of the righteous asserted. The [righteous] are assured of the powerful protection of the Supreme Being, whose favour they at present enjoy; whose wisdom is continually, though invisibly, operating in securing their future good. "The Lord loveth judgement, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever."*

In opposition to the transient prosperity and the fugitive pleasures enjoyed by the wicked, the righteous is distinguished by the possession of permanent principles and unfading prospects. He is upheld by an invisible, but abiding power, and his character and conduct partake of the unchangeableness which belongs to his interior principles: "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."

By "the law," in this passage, it is probable we are

* Psalm xxxvii. 28, 29.

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to understand the word of God in general, with a particular reference to the preceptive part, in the same sense as it must undoubtedly be taken throughout the 119th Psalm. The preceptive part forms so essential a branch of every system of revelation, that it may with great propriety impart its peculiar name to the whole; agreeably to which even the gospel is denominated "the law of faith."*

These words present us, first, with a view of the internal principle which actuates a good man—"*the law of God is in his heart;*" next, with its effects on his external character and conduct,—"*none of his steps shall slide.*"

I. The inward principle which actuates him: "the law of God is in his heart." This implies,

1. An acquaintance with the law, considered as the standard of holiness, as the rule of action. A precept may be known, which is not obeyed, when it is not known. Nor will ignorance of the will of God excuse the disobedient; since such ignorance must be voluntary, the consequence of "loving darkness rather than light." The time is long past when such a pretence might have been urged with some plausibility. That period is elapsed when it was necessary for men "to feel after God," like persons who grope in search of an object in the dark. "The day hath dawned, the day-star hath arisen," the light of revelation shines with a brilliant effulgence, and the path of duty [is] made so plain, that the "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."† When ignorance of the will of the Great Supreme arises from inattention, from carnal security, from a passive indifference whether he be pleased or displeased; instead of mitigating, it aggravates the guilt of disobedience. "They are a people," saith the prophet, "of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, he that formed them will show them no favour."‡ How different is it with the good man! "As the eyes of servants look unto their masters, and the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so his eyes wait upon the Lord;" that he may attend to his directions and receive his orders. Conscious that he is made for God, he carefully explores his will, and he "meditates on his law day and night."

By a careful perusal of the sacred volume, by diligently weighing and pondering the precepts of revelation, he is constantly enlarging his conceptions of duty, and arriving nearer and nearer to a full and perfect comprehension of the spirit and import of its sacred injunctions. His fear of God is not taught by the commandments of men, stands not in human observances and will-worship, but in a solid acquaintance with the dictates of inspiration. Hence the service he presents is a reasonable one, the offspring of an enlightened faith, such as it is becoming man to offer, and God to accept.

By seriously applying the mind to the exhortations and injunctions of the sacred page, a good man arrives at a "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," and his senses are "exercised to discern between good and evil."

2. The man of God is distinguished by an habitual [reference] to his mind and will. He is not merely acquainted with it as a branch of speculation, which serves to extend his knowledge, and to recommend itself to his understanding, while it seldom mingles with the ordinary current of his thoughts; it is not merely deposited in that department of his mind which seems a cabinet for the preservation of what is curious, rather than the reception of that which he has daily occasion to use. The precepts of God occupy much of his thoughts, and engage much of his attention. The knowledge of them is continually revived, the remembrance of them refreshed, by daily mental recollections, by reiterated acts of attention, such as it becomes us to exert towards the counsels and ordinances of the Great Eternal. It is thus, and thus only, that knowledge becomes practical and influential; that the light which first pervades the intellect, descends into the heart, and diffuses itself through all the faculties of the soul.

"And these words," said Moses, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."*

The original word is extremely expressive,—"thou shalt whet them on thy children," [or whet thy children upon them,] in allusion to the practice of giving the necessary edge to certain instruments, by continual friction with hard substances. Thus a good man whets the word of God on his own mind [so as to sharpen it] by successive acts of serious attention, [and thus acquire] an aptitude in applying it to its proper purpose. In the most busy and tumultuous scenes of life, it naturally occurs to his recollections, it instantaneously presents itself to his thoughts; while to the wicked the "judgements of the Lord are far above out of his sight," and it is with great difficulty that he raises his mind to such high and holy meditations, and, after all, it is a painful and short-lived effort.

3. The good man is impressed with a deep sense of the obligation of the law of God, accompanied with a sincere resolution of implicit and unreserved obedience. He is not only acquainted with the rules of duty, he does not merely make them the object of his serious and habitual attention: he accedes to the justice of their claims; his conscience is enlightened to discern their equity and their obligation; and he humbly but firmly resolves in the strength of divine grace, to yield a practical compliance. Far from arraigning the precepts of God as too strict, too extended, or too spiritual, he entirely acquiesces in their justice and propriety, and turns the edge of his censure and reproaches on himself only. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" He is perfectly satisfied that, however he may be "carnal, sold under sin," "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."† He blames himself

* Deut. vi. 6, 7. † Rom. vii. 12.

only, not the strictness of the precept; he laments the weakness and corruption of the flesh, not the purity of the divine command. Although he perfectly despairs of yielding such an obedience to its requisitions as shall justify him in the sight of God, he maintains a steady and conscientious respect to all his commandments. "Thy word," saith David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgements."*

Holy resolutions are essential to a sincere obedience: they may become abortive by being framed in our own strength, and without "counting the cost;" but, notwithstanding, they are a necessary preparation to the conscientious performance of duty. Nothing is more certain than that real religion is a reasonable and voluntary service; he will never truly serve God who is not deliberately resolved to do so. Good resolutions bear the same relation to [upright conduct] as the seed bears to the fruit.

All this, however, of itself, is indeed sufficient to form a slave, not a child—to produce a constrained and reluctant obedience, not the cheerful homage of a heart flowing with gratitude and love. The understanding may be enlightened, conscience awakened, and the external conduct reputable; while the service of God is felt as an insupportable load, with difficulty sustained, though impossible to be shaken off.

Something more is requisite to render religion a delight, to convert wisdom's ways into "ways of pleasantness," and her paths into "paths of peace."

4. To put the finishing stroke, then, to the character of a good man, let me add, once more, that his heart is inspired with a love to the law of God after "the inner man." Considered as a transcript of the divine perfections, as an expression of [God's] immaculate holiness, as the instrument of his sanctification, it is the object of his devoted attachment. The dispositions which it enforces are wrought into his heart; the inward bias of

* Psalm cxix. 105, 106.

his mind is directed towards the holiness which it prescribes; and so intense is his approbation of all its requisitions, that the least alteration in it would give him pain. He longs, not to have the standard of duty reduced to his level, but to have his own heart raised to its elevation. He would not wish for a law which connived at impurity, which commanded any thing short of moral perfection. [Its] immaculate holiness, to him, forms its principal attraction.

It is also entitled to our warmest attachment, on account of its beneficial tendency; it is adapted, in the highest degree, to correct every moral irregularity, and to diffuse order and happiness throughout the whole creation. In proportion as it is obeyed, it never fails to insure the "peaceable fruits of righteousness."

Hence those passionate expressions of attachment to the holy precepts of God, which abound in the writings of David, and particularly in the 119th Psalm. "O how love I thy law!" "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgements at all times." "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed: and I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate on thy statutes."

Its precepts may often do violence to the inclinations of flesh and blood, may often urge to laborious duties and painful sacrifices; sinful pleasures may be [desired], which unsanctified natures find as difficult to part with, as to "cut off a right hand, or to pluck out a right eye;" but still the manifest equity of its requisitions, and their evident subserviency to our best, our eternal interest, is such that they are cordially approved. A congeniality of mind with the tenor of the divine precepts is experienced; whence arises a practical compliance, not so much the fruit of necessity, as the effect of inward vital principle. Herein is fulfilled the gracious declaration of the new covenant—"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in

their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."* This is the great work of the Spirit on the souls of the faithful, the seal of God on the heart of his servants, and the distinguishing feature in the character of his children. Their love to the law produces grief at seeing it violated. "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law."†

5. In a good man this attachment to the law of God, and to the rules of duty, is progressive, and, with every accession of religious experience, becomes more vigorous and confirmed. The farther he advances in his christian course, the more deeply he is convinced that his prosperity is inseparably allied to obedience, that his spiritual enjoyments rise or fall in proportion as he walks more or less closely with his God. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."‡

"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."§

II. Its effects on the character and conduct: "none of his steps shall slide." His steps shall not fatally slide; he shall maintain a uniform and consistent deportment.

1. The violence of temptation shall not overpower him.
2. The suddenness of it shall not surprise him.
3. The deceitfulness of it shall not seduce him.
4. The example of the multitude shall not prevail.

* Jer. xxxi. 33. † Psalm cxix. 53.
‡ Psalm lxxxi. 13, 14, 16. § Isa. xlviii. 17, 18.

XXII.

ON PRAYER FOR THE INCREASE OF FAITH.

LUKE xvii. 5.—*And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.*

WE have here an example of prayer addressed to Christ; which implies an acknowledgement of his divinity, since it is a received principle of scripture that God only is the proper object of prayer.

It is the more deserving of our attention on account of its being a prayer for a spiritual blessing, and that a blessing of prime importance; nor could it, with any propriety, be presented to one who was not conceived to have immediate access to the mind. However wavering or confused the apprehension the apostles entertained of Christ's personal dignity might be, during the continuance of his ministry on earth, it seems evident, from this instance, that there were seasons when they felt a lively conviction of his divinity, under which they ascribed to him a sovereign power over the heart.

From the reply which our Saviour makes to this petition, it is probable it more immediately respected that faith of miracles with which the apostles were, in some measure, endued, and which was greatly strengthened and enlarged after the day of Pentecost. The weakness of that faith they had, on some occasions, experienced, when persons afflicted with maladies were brought to them, and they were not able to effect their cure.* A circumstance of this nature, it is possible, had recently occurred, which gave rise to this request.

Whatever particular species of faith might be designed in the words of the apostle, now before us, we shall beg leave to consider faith, in the present discourse, in its more ordinary acceptation, in which it denotes a persuasion of divine truth, founded on the testimony, and produced by the Spirit, of God.

* Luke ix. 40.

The faith of which we shall speak is that cordial assent to the testimony of God, which distinguishes all regenerate persons, and which is defined by St. Paul, "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Faith, in the New Testament, is applied solely to the exercise of the mind on the divine testimony. It denotes a reliance on the veracity and faithfulness of God; his veracity respecting the truth of what he has affirmed, his faithfulness in the accomplishment of what he has promised. Hence it differs from sense and reason. Of the objects of the former we gain a knowledge by immediate experience, by their direct impressions on the bodily organs; of those which fall within the province of the latter, we arrive at a conviction, by a process of argument more or less simple. Faith, on the contrary, is a reliance on the truth of what God has declared, simply because he has declared it. It implies a revelation of his mind and will: and the principle on which it founds the assurance of whatever it embraces is this, the Supreme Being can neither deceive his creatures, nor be deceived. It converses with supernatural verities, that is, with truths which are not capable of being ascertained by sense, or demonstrated by reason.

In our present discourse we shall confine ourselves to two observations.

I. That genuine faith admits of degrees.

II. That an increase of faith is, on every account highly desirable.

I. Where faith is genuine and sincere, it is yet susceptible of different degrees. Considered with respect to the number of the truths embraced, it is obvious, at first sight, that the faith of one christian may be far more extensive than that of another. Though every real christian embraces the whole revelation of God, and has, consequently, an implicit confidence in all the declarations contained in it, yet the knowledge of one may extend to many more particulars than that of another: a more accurate acquaintance with the Scriptures may

* Heb. xi. 1.

bring before the view some truths of which the other entertains no conception. The religious belief of one may be confined to first principles while that of another includes also the higher and more refined mysteries of christianity. Considered in this light, none can doubt of the possibility of an increase of faith; though, strictly speaking, such an enlargement of the view may be more properly denominated an increase of knowledge.

An increase of faith respects more immediately, farther developement of the principle itself, a greater force of persuasion, a more unshaken confidence in revealed truth, accompanied with a more uncontrolled ascendency of it over the heart. The strength of Abraham's faith is described, not as consisting in the extent of the truths it embraced, but in the force and vigour of his persuasion of the divine promises. It is opposed to his "staggering through unbelief." A persuasion of the same divine truths, even when it is cordial and sincere, may admit of augmentation. The power and grace of the Redeemer, for example, by which, "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,"* are cordially believed by all christians, but they are apprehended with different measures of clearness and force: with some they are sufficient to embolden them to venture upon him with trembling hope; with others they produce the full assurance of faith, accompanied with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."† The transcendent love of the Redeemer, in dying for us, is truly apprehended, and sincerely believed, by all true christians; but the views which they entertain of it are very different in depth and impression. As the same object may be seen under different lights, so the same truths may be contemplated with distinct degrees of evidence and brightness. To "perfect that which is lacking in your faith."‡ "Your faith groweth exceedingly."§ "But having hope, when your faith is increased."‖

By the nature of things, the light of faith must ever

* Heb. vii. 25. † 1 Pet. i. 8. ‡ 1 Thess. iii. 10. § 2 Thess. i. 3. ‖ 2 Cor. x. 15.

be inferior to that of vision; it can never fully reach in its power over the heart, the perfection of sight, and, consequently, will never make us equally happy or holy with those who "see as they are seen, and know as they are known." There is a limit to which it can never reach, but it may make nearer and nearer approaches to it. These things, on which the faith of a christian is exercised, may be considered as twofold; consisting either of objects revealed, which have a present subsistence, or promises of future good. The character and perfections of the blessed God, the office and work of the Redeemer, the dignity of his person, the efficacy of his blood, and the prevalence of his intercession, belong to the former. The light of faith makes this known to us: and this light is progressive, and by it we may attain to still higher and more transforming views of God and the Redeemer.*

XXIII.

SECOND DISCOURSE, ON PRAYER FOR THE INCREASE OF FAITH.

Luke xvii. 5.—*Lord, increase our faith.*

The advantages resulting from an increase of faith.

I. As they respect ourselves.

II. As they regard the Supreme Being.

I. As they respect ourselves. It will have powerful influence in increasing our religious enjoyments. One grand design of christianity is to make mankind happy by diminishing that portion of vexation of spirit which cleaves to all earthly things. "These things have I spoken unto you," said our blessed Lord, "that your joy might be full."† But the degree of this joy will be proportioned to the measure of our faith.

1. An increase of faith will effectually deliver us from

* This and the following sermon were preached in June, 1810.
† John xv. 11.

distressing doubts respecting our state. As light makes all other things manifest, so it makes itself. While faith is "like to a grain of mustard seed,"* it may be difficult to be discerned; but, when it becomes more matured, it will be easily perceivable.

2. The things of God are so transcendently excellent and glorious, that the more lively our apprehension of them, the more happy we shall necessarily be. The more we see of God in Christ, the more we shall be conscious of a surpassing beauty in those objects, that will eclipse the whole world in our view. The all-sufficiency and unchangeableness, the goodness, holiness, and truth of the Great Eternal, viewed by faith, will fill the mind with the most exalted satisfaction. The glory of the visible heavens and of the earth, is nothing more than the reflection, or rather the shadow, of this glory. If the contemplation of created truth and goodness, developed in the actions of man, affords so high a satisfaction; if it is sufficient in its brightest display, to excite rapture; how much more [will the mind be] fired in meditating by faith on the original, unchanging, and eternal truth and goodness! If to trace the counsels of princes, [to observe] the masterly strokes of wisdom and address, evinced in the management of the concerns of earthly kingdoms [gives pleasure,] how much more ravishing to have laid open to our view the counsels of the King of kings; to be allowed to behold the deep things of God; the contrivance of that covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure; the thoughts of his heart, which endure to all generations! How delightful to see the footsteps of divine grace in ancient times, the gradual preparations for the coming of Christ, the types and shadows of the law preparing the way for preaching the cross, and the preaching of the cross succeeded by the vision of eternal glory! If to contemplate some stupendous work of God fills the mind with admiration and delight, how much more to dwell by faith on the mediation of Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express

* Matt. xiii. 31.

image of his person;"* assuming our nature, carrying our sins up with him to the cross, rising from the dead, sitting at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession, diffusing his Spirit, and scattering his graces, among the children of men. Who that knows any thing of such an object, can be content without wishing to know more of him? Who will not be disposed to look on all things else as dross and dung when compared to such an object?

To feel the steady illumination of faith, is to dwell in a calm and holy light; and if it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the natural light, how much more to behold this light of God, which sheds an incomparably sweeter ray; which reveals his face, brings near his love, and lays open the prospects of eternity! Guided by this light, you will be conducted to the abode of the celestial city, when a view will be opened into paradise, and you will hear, with John, "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and crying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."†

1. An increase of faith will deliver us from the perplexity which springs from a state of mind unsettled in religion.

2. It will have an extensive influence on our sanctification.

(1.) The joys of faith will diminish your sensibility of the pleasures of sin. The pure and certain satisfaction, which springs from spiritual views, will indispose you to relish the polluted gratifications of sense; the satisfaction to be derived from earthly pleasures will appear too light and airy, too transitory and inconstant, to bear a comparison with those richer enjoyments to which the soul has access by faith.

(2.) As the gospel supplies the strongest motives to holiness, so faith brings the heart into contact with those motives.

* Heb. i. 3. † Rev. xiv. 2; v. 13.

(3.) So important is an increase of faith to an advancement in the divine life, that all the graces of the christian are represented as so many fruits of faith, neither any farther acceptable to God than as they sprung from this principle. In their extent, perfection, and variety, they are nothing more than the genuine practice of a lively faith: "Abide in me, and let my words abide in you."* Faith is a prolific grace, it produces and maintains every other; it "works by love;"† "it purifies the heart."‡

II. In its aspect towards God. It is the grand instrument of glorifying him.

In its essential exercises, apart from its external effects it is eminently adapted to glorify God. It renders to him the glory due unto his name. It rests on him as the Eternal Truth, as the Rock of Ages; "Abraham being strong in faith, gave glory to God."§

Directions for increasing Faith.

I. Earnest and humble prayer: "Lord, increase our faith." Fall at the footstool of the cross, crying, with him in the gospel, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."‖

II. Frequent and devout converse with the object of it.

III. Watchfulness against the influence of those objects which have a fatal tendency to eclipse its light, to obstruct its operations, and impair its effects; namely, sensual pleasure; eager pursuit of the world; intimate converse with men of the world.

* John xv. 7. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ 1 John iii. 3.
§ Rom. iv. 20. ‖ Mark ix. 24.

XXIV.

ON WISDOM.

JAMES I. 5.—*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.**

Of all the gifts which God is wont to dispense to the children of men, the most valuable is wisdom. Without this, the advantages we derive from every other are precarious and transitory, and are often more than overbalanced by the evils which result from their abuse. Wisdom is of incomparable value, as it instructs us how to use every other good; how to turn it to the best account, and make it most subservient to the true end of our being. The Scriptures extol the excellence of wisdom in the highest terms:—"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than pure gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her."†

Wisdom is to be distinguished from knowledge; to which it bears an affinity, but ought not to be confounded with it. There may be a large compass of knowledge acquired, the fruit of extensive observation and reading, accompanied with a quick perception and a capacious memory, where there is very little wisdom. A wretched misconduct may appear at the same [time], a series of imprudences, thoughtless prodigality, or intemperance, sufficient to invalidate the least pretension to wisdom. There are far more knowing than wise men. Talents of the highest order, and such as are calculated to command universal admiration, may exist apart from wisdom. Though wisdom necessarily presupposes knowledge, and it is impossible to exercise it in things of which we are ignorant, yet it ought to be something more practical, or rather more comprehensive: it ever bears a relation to

* Preached in June 1811 † Prov. iii. 13–15.

the end; and, in proportion as it is perfect, to the highest and last end the agent can be supposed to have in view. It first judges of the end fittest to be pursued, and next determines what are the most fitting and suitable means of accomplishing it.

Every other quality besides is subordinate and inferior to wisdom, in the same sense as the mason who lays the bricks and stones in a building is inferior to the architect who drew the plan and superintends the work. The former executes only what the latter contrives and directs. Now, it is the prerogative of wisdom to preside over every inferior principle, to regulate the exercise of every power, and limit the indulgence of every appetite, as shall best conduce to one great end. It being the province of wisdom to preside, it sits as umpire on every difficulty, and so gives the final direction and control to all the powers of our nature. Hence it is entitled to be considered as the top and summit of perfection. It belongs to wisdom to determine when to act, and when to cease; when to reveal, and when to conceal a matter; when to speak, and when to keep silence; when to give, and when to receive; in short, to regulate the measure of all things, as well as to determine the end, and provide the means of obtaining the end, pursued in every deliberate course of action.

Every particular faculty or skill besides needs to derive direction from this; they are all quite incapable of directing themselves. The art of navigation, for instance, will teach us to steer a ship across the ocean, but it will never teach us on what occasions it is proper to take a voyage. The art of war will instruct us how to marshal an army, or to fight a battle, to the greatest advantage; but you must learn from a higher school when it is fitting, just, and proper, to wage war or to make peace. The art of the husbandman is to sow and bring to maturity the precious fruits of the earth; it belongs to another skill to regulate their consumption by a regard to our health, fortune, and other circumstances.

In short, there is no faculty we can exert, no species of skill we can apply, but requires a superintending hand; but looks up, as it were, to some higher principle, as a maid to her mistress, for direction: and this universal superintendent is wisdom.*

To carry our ideas of it as far as possible, the wise man traces it up to its fountain, and contemplates it as it subsists in the breast of Deity. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."†

But though we have taken occasion to speak thus far of wisdom in general, it is doubtful whether we are to take the word in that extension in the passage before us. If we turn to the context, we shall find St. James describing the happy fruits which result from a right temper under affliction and persecution. This epistle, as well as the two epistles of Peter, are supposed to have been addressed to the Jews under circumstances of persecution. St. James had exhorted christians to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of their faith worketh patience. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." He then adds, "If any of you lack wisdom," (that is, the wisdom necessary to suffer right, the wisdom included in a right and becoming temper under persecutions and trials,) "let him ask of God."

In this view, the wisdom here mentioned may be considered as including two things.

I. A knowledge of duty.

* The admirers of Cowper will, on reading the above, be naturally reminded of his graphic contrast of Knowledge and Wisdom, in the sixth book of the Task.

"Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smooth'd, and squar'd, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learnt so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."—Ed.

† Prov. iii. 19, 20.

A clear and just conception of what was duty, was not always easily attained. A season of persecution for righteousness' sake would naturally be productive, in many cases, of great difficulty in determining how to act.

"When they persecute you in one city," said our Lord, "flee ye to another." But what is the degree of danger, what the [serious advance] of the approaching storm, that will exempt flight from the charge of pusillanimity? What the just limits betwixt a temporizing policy and imprudent rashness? There is, doubtless, a just limit betwixt wantonly exposing ourselves to danger, and a cowardly shrinking from it; betwixt that selfish timidity which will sacrifice truth to safety, and that undistinguishing fearlessness which will prompt us "to cast pearls before swine," though it be morally certain "they will turn again and rend us."

A nice discernment of the true path of duty on such occasions can only be acquired by divine teaching.

II. The wisdom necessary in such circumstances includes especially a right temper of mind towards God and our fellow-creatures.

1. Towards God. This temper very much consists in a humble acquiescence in his dispensations, in a readiness to suffer under his hand, and in his cause. It is one thing to suffer under the hand of God inevitable calamities; and another to suffer with a cheerful resignation, with a full and unreserved acquiescence in the divine disposals, mixing adoring thoughts of the wisdom of his proceedings and the equity of his dispensations, saying, from the heart, with our blessed Lord, "Not my will, but thine be done;" "Father, glorify thy name." In this, and in every other instance, the conduct of our Lord furnishes us with a perfect example of that wisdom it is our duty to implore of God. The wisdom that bows the mind to submission, "stays it upon God," and fills it with meekness and compassion, while we "commit ourselves to him as to a faithful Creator," is of no ordinary kind—can be procured only from one quarter.

2. This includes a proper temper towards our fellow-creatures; and particularly towards the authors of our sufferings. Nature, left to itself, is apt to break out into resentment, to feel exasperated; and the more in proportion as the treatment we meet with is unquestionably unreasonable and unjust.

The first suggestion of nature in such circumstances, is, "to render evil for evil," to wish to be revenged, and to retaliate the usage we have sustained. Very different is the wisdom that is from above: which teaches, "if our enemy be hungry, to feed him; if thirsty, to give him drink, and thus to heap coals of fire upon his head:" that, instead of being "overcome of evil, we may overcome evil with good,"* To look upon men, however injurious, as instruments in the hand of the just and holy God; and to overlook the former, in an attention to the latter, is a high attainment of spiritual wisdom; like David, who when he was cursed and insulted by Shimei, said, "Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him; it may be that the Lord may requite me good for his cursing this day."†

While we feel the effects of their malice, to forgive it freely and sincerely, and to pray with sincerity that it may not be laid to their charge,—not to permit the conduct of the enemy to induce a forgetfulness of what belongs to him as a creature of God, and a partaker of the same nature,—is a piece of wisdom that is truly godlike. While we are assisted by divine grace to bear persecutions and afflictions in a right spirit, the gracious purpose of God in permitting them, advances towards its completion; the process goes on without disturbance; the sanctifying tendency of it continues unchecked; patience has its perfect work, in order to our being "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Repining and impatience tend eminently to frustrate the [merciful] intentions of Providence in our affliction; while the composure of a well-regulated mind—of a mind stayed upon God, gives them an opportunity of working their full effect. And, on this account, a suitable temper in

* Rom. xii. 20, 21. † 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12.

a season of persecution and trial may justly be denominated an important branch of wisdom. Though the apostle had, in enjoining the duty before us, an especial view to the case of persecution, yet this is by no means the only case to which the advice is applicable. The occasions in which we lack wisdom are very numerous: in each of them it will behove us to ask it of God.

We are continually liable to difficulties and sorrows, from which nothing but a superior skill to our own can extricate us: "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* Are we at a loss, in present circumstances, to descry the path of duty and safety, when our way appears to be hedged in on every side; is darkness set in our paths, and we know not how to proceed?—"Let us ask wisdom of God." Do we feel ourselves habitually overpowered by the force of temptation; do we feel evil present with us, or are we in danger of being carried [along] by the [violence] of our sensual appetites, against which we have hitherto struggled in vain? [let us ask wisdom of God.]

Enforce the exhortation of seeking it of God in the following considerations:—

I. As it is of indispensable necessity, so it is in vain to seek it elsewhere.

II. It resides in him in its utmost perfection.

III. He is willing to communicate: "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous."† "Giveth liberally," ἁπλῶς, with a liberal mind, bountifully.

"The caution,—"nothing doubting."

* Jer. x. 23. † Prov. ii. 6. 7.

XXV.

ON ENGAGEDNESS OF HEART IN APPROACHING UNTO GOD.

JEREMIAH XXX. 21.—*For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.*

IN this chapter is contained an illustrious prophecy of the restoration of the ancient Israelites to their own land: first, from their captivity in Babylon, whither a part of the nation were already, and the remainder were shortly to be removed; next, from their long captivity and dispersion through all the countries of the earth, which has now subsisted for nearly eighteen hundred years. As a standing record of the faithfulness of God to his promises, as well as his infallible foreknowledge of all events, the prophet is commanded to commit to writing all the words which God had spoken to him during the whole time he had exercised the prophetic office.

Those who had presumed to speak in the name of the Lord, without being commissioned, had flattered the [Jews] with the assurances that the residue of the people should not be carried into Babylon, and that the part of the nation which were already sent thither should speedily be restored to their native country. In opposition to these false suggestions, Jeremiah was commanded to send a message to the captives in Babylon, saying, "Build ye houses in Babylon, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons."* In that message he delivered the famous prediction respecting the precise time of the duration of their captivity, which he limits to seventy years, and the study of which enabled Daniel to perceive its approaching termination. "In the first year of his reign (*i. e.* of Darius) I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the destruction of Jerusalem."†

* Jer. xxix. 5, 6. † Dan. ix. 2.

As a part of the distinguishing favours which God said he had in reserve for the people, he promises that at their restoration the oppression of a foreign yoke should be broken, and they should be again ruled by princes of their own race, agreeable to the language of Isaiah respecting the same event; when the people shall first be purified and reformed by divine chastisement, and, afterwards, reinstated in a happy and prosperous condition. "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgement, and her converts with righteousness."* It is not only foretold that a native governor should be set over the house of Israel, but that he should be distinguished for his piety—"The Lord will cause him to draw nigh unto him."

The words of the text may be considered in three points of view.

I. As descriptive of the character of Zerubbabel, they were accomplished in the restoration of the Jews, after the seventy years' captivity, when a governor was appointed over them, named Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the great grandson of Jehoiachim. He was a person eminently devoted to God, who exerted himself with much zeal in rebuilding the altar and the temple, and establishing the worship of God. Under his auspices, the services of the sanctuary were renewed, after a cessation of seventy years. The feast of tabernacles was established in the seventh month. Masons and builders were hired from Sidon to assist in erecting the temple, the foundation of which was laid amidst confused expressions of joy and lamentation: joy on the part of the young men at witnessing the house of God rising up from its ruins; and lamentation on the part of the old, who had beheld the superior glory of the former.†

When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, envy-

* Isa. i. 25—27. † See Ezra iii. 11—13.

ing their prosperity, hired counsellors against them, and procured an order from the king of Persia to put a stop to the work, it was of necessity suspended for a while; but he lost no time in resuming it at the first opportunity, till it was completed in the sixth year of Darius Hystaspes. A feast of dedication was kept on this joyful occasion, and afterwards the feast of the passover was celebrated on the fourteenth of the first month, with great joy, as Ezra observes: "The Lord made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."*

He, and Joshua the high-priest, were represented in the visions of Zechariah, as the two candlesticks supplied through pipes from olive trees, to indicate the plenitude of that juice with which they were endued, which is thus explained by the angel:—"Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."† The difficulties attending the work, which were very great in themselves, were extremely heightened by the malice and opposition of the enemies of God, particularly of the Samaritans; but the strength and fortitude with which he was endowed from on high enabled him to surmount them. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" said the prophet; "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands also shall finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you."‡

II. The words of the text admit of being applied, with the greatest propriety, to the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy contained in the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters looks forward to gospel times, and has an ultimate respect to the final restoration of the Jews, and their conversion to the Messiah, of whom Zerubbabel was an illustrious type. The prophet was wont, in connexion with the assurances of the divine favour to the

* Ezra vi. 22. † Zech. iv. 14. ‡ Zech. iv. 7—9.

Israelites, in restoring their temple after the captivity, to mix predictions of the coming of the Messiah:—"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."*

The prophet foreseeing the coming of the Messiah, and descrying his character, spake with an air of surprise: "And who is he that has engaged his heart to approach unto God?" None ever approached unto God so nearly, or under the same character as he did. He, considered as man, was taken into an intimate personal union with the Deity, so as to become Immanuel, or "God with us;"† and he approached to God, in the office of a Mediator, to make peace between the offended Majesty of Heaven and his sinful creatures. He came, like Aaron, with incense, betwixt the living and the dead, to stay the plague, and arrest divine vengeance in its career. He approached unto God in our behalf, not with the trembling diffidence of a sinful mortal, who is conscious of his own danger and demerits, but with the holy, becoming boldness of a son to a father. He interposed with precious blood; and on the ground of the stipulations which intervene between him and the Father, claims his church as his purchase, and asserts his authority to save them "with an everlasting salvation:" "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."‡ He made his approach to God by a vicarious sacrifice and spotless obedience, by enduring the awful penalty denounced on transgressors; and by magnifying the law made it honourable.

His heart was also ineffably engaged in this work. None ever exhibited such a concern for the divine honour, such a zeal for the divine interests, as was exemplified by our blessed Lord. "Sacrifice and offering

* Zech. vi. 12, 13. † Isaiah vii. 14. ‡ Job xxxiii. 24.

thou didst not desire: in burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hadst no pleasure. Then I said, To do thy will, O God, I come; thy law is within my heart."*

Nor was he deterred by the greatest discouragements, nor dismayed by the greatest opposition, nor by the certain prospect of the most dismal sufferings, so as to desist from persevering in his undertaking till it was completed. He did not "fail, nor was discouraged, till he had set judgement in the earth."

Animated by the joy that was set before him, "he endured the cross, despising the shame."

If we look through all the scenes and passages of his life, we shall find him incessantly engaged in his Father's business, with an utter contempt of the world, and a perfect absorption of mind in the great and holy objects he came to accomplish. He never for a moment lost sight of the ends of his mission, nor ever suffered his attention to be diverted from them by the love of ease, the fascination of pleasure, or the terrors of death. His disciples, who were the daily witnesses of his actions, were compelled to apply to him a remarkable expression in the prophetic part of the Psalms—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."†

III. We may consider the passage before us as highly expressive of the true manner in which the service of God must be undertaken, if we would render it acceptable to him, or useful to ourselves.

Among the heathen, it was usual to form a conjecture of the good or ill success of application to their deities, from the state in which the entrails of the victim were found; and nothing was considered as a more fatal omen than its *wanting a heart.* Their worship, we are well aware, was folly and delusion; but in this instance it may serve to illustrate the subject before us, which is, the absolute necessity of the heart being engaged in religion.

By the heart, the Scriptures generally intend the innermost and the noblest powers of the mind, in opposi-

* Psalm xl. 6—8. † Psalm lxix. 9.

tion to external actions of the body. It denotes deliberate choice, understanding, and feeling, as distinguished from the semblance of devotion, consisting in a compliance with its visible forms and regulations. As the heart has usually (whether justly or not it is not necessary to inquire) been looked upon as the seat of feeling, in like manner as the brain has been supposed to be the chief organ of thought, it has been, by an easy metaphor, employed to denote that faculty of the soul by which we perceive what appears,desirable, and cleave to what affords us satisfaction, and taste the delight which certain objects are adapted to afford. This is a most essential part of religion; here is its proper seat.

1. It implies a preparation of heart for religious duties. Ezra "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it," to disengage his mind from vain imaginations, from worldly thoughts, from every thing, in short, foreign to the spirit of religion. By a diligent perusal of a portion of the word of God, we are prepared to approach him; by hearing him when he speaks to us, we are fitted to speak to him.

He who rushes into the presence of the Most High without solemn deliberation, without reflecting on the weighty and serious nature of such an undertaking, can with little propriety be said to have "engaged his heart."

2. It includes the exercise of suitable affections in the services of religion, the being susceptible of such sentiments and dispositions as are correspondent to the universal object of worship, as well as to the diversified circumstances in which [we are placed.] Love, reverence, and trust, a profound sense of our own meanness and pollution, belong universally to every approach to God. While these dispositions in truly pious souls, will receive a colour and complexion from their peculiar condition,—according as it is a condition of joy or sorrow, of sensible consolation or of desertion, is depressed with a consciousness of guilt or exhilirated with a sense of pardon,—the soul sometimes, with little reflection on its own state, will be taken up with adoring views of the divine glory, delightfully losing itself in the vivid contemplation of the great All in All. At other times it will be occupied with an affecting view of the conduct of God towards it in providence and grace. "We thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple."* There are seasons again, when, under the burdens of guilt and distress, it will be incessantly stirring itself up to take hold upon God. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord: my soul is bowed down within me; my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."†

In such circumstances the pious soul will resemble Jacob, who wrestled with the angel, wept, and made supplication. In all these various exercises, the heart will be engaged in approaching to God: the heart will be mingled with it, as the expression signifies.

3. It includes constancy and unshaken firmness, stedfastness of resolution to cleave to God. "I have sworn," says David, "and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgements. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end."

(Contrast this with the conduct of the Children of Israel at the Red Sea, and with Saul.)

XXVI.

ON FAMILY WORSHIP.

1 Chron. xvi. 43.—*And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.*

Public exercises of religion, when properly conducted, have a happy tendency to prepare the mind for those of a more private nature. When the soul is elevated and the heart softened by the feelings which public worship is calculated to inspire, we are prepared to address the

* Psalm xlviii. 9. † Psalm vi. 2. xxxviii. 5, 6.

throne of grace with peculiar advantage; we are disposed to enter with a proper relish on such a duty, and thus "go from strength to strength." David, at the time to which this passage refers, had been assisting at a great and joyful solemnity, that of bringing the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom, where it had abode three months, to the place which he had prepared for it. The joy which David felt on this interesting occasion was very rapturous. He conducted it to Jerusalem, and set it in the midst of the tent he had pitched for it. He offered, as a testimony of his zeal and devotion, burnt offerings and sacrifices to God, and then closed the solemnity.

We need be at no loss to ascertain the import of this expression. It undoubtedly signifies his imploring the blessing of God upon his people by prayer and supplication. Under the ancient law, God was pleased to appoint a form in which Aaron, the high-priest, was commanded to bless the people. "On this wise ye shall bless the Children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."*

This instructs us how to understand what is meant by "David's returning to bless his house;" it was to present them to God in prayer, and entreat his blessing upon them.

I shall take occasion from these words to urge upon you the duty of family prayer; a duty, I fear, too much neglected amongst us, though it is one of high importance and indispensable obligation. In bringing this subject before you, I shall, first, attempt to show the solid reasons on which it is founded; and, secondly, endeavour, with the blessing of God, to suggest a few hints respecting the best method of performing it.

I. The passage before us invites us to consider it is a practice by which good men have been distinguished in every age.

* Numb. vi. 23–26.

It pleads the sanction of the highest example. It was exemplified, we see, in the conduct of David, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," "the men after God's own heart;" a great and victorious prince, who did not suppose the cares of royalty a sufficient reason for neglecting it. In the various removals of Abraham from place to place, we find that wherever he came to sojourn he built an altar, to call upon the name of the Lord: an altar at which there is the greatest reason to believe he was wont to assemble his family, and to present his addresses on their, as well as his own, behalf. We know, from the testimony of scripture, that he was eminently conspicuous for the care he took of the religious instruction of his household. This part of his character is attested in the following emphatic manner: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."*

But wherein, we may safely ask, was this solicitude for the spiritual welfare of his household displayed, if he never bowed the knee with them in prayer; never exemplified before their eyes so important a duty as that of devout supplication to the Almighty?

In the history of Isaac we read of his building an altar at Beersheba, and calling upon the name of the Lord. Such also was the custom of Jacob at the different places where he fixed his habitation. On one of these occasions we find him thus addressing his household: "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."†

Thus ancient is the practice on which we are now insisting. It appears to have formed a prominent part of the religion of patriarchal times, and it has subsisted in every period of the christian church.

* Gen. xviii. 19. † Gen. xxxv. 2, 3.

In later ages, who among the devoted servants of Christ can be mentioned, that have neglected it? The pious reformers, the venerable founders of the Established Church of England, we know, conscientiously practised and earnestly enforced it; and so did our pious forefathers among the nonconformists. This was a branch of their conduct for which they incurred the ridicule of a careless and ungodly world; and in their days it was ever recognized as an inseparable appendage of true piety. They would have required no further proof of the absence of the fear of God in a family than the want of a domestic altar, at which its members might call on the name of the Lord.

2. Family prayer is a natural and necessary acknowledgement of the dependence of families upon God, and of the innumerable obligations they are under to his goodness. The union of mankind in families is ascribed to God, and is a distinguished [mark] of his loving-kindness. "God setteth the solitary in families."* "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children."† The ties of domestic society are of his forming: the birth and preservation of children are eminent instances of his favour and beneficence. It is surely incumbent on families, then, to acknowledge him in their domestic relation.

Every family is a separate community, placed under one head, and governed by laws independent of foreign control. This sort of society is the root and origin of every other; and as it is the most ancient, so it is bound together by ties [the most] tender and sacred. Every other social bond in which men are united is loose and incidental, compared to that which unites the members of the same family.

On what, let me ask, does the obligation of social worship rest? Is it not in the social nature by which man is distinguished? It is because we are destined to live in society, and are bound together by mutual wants and sympathies, that it becomes a duty to worship the

* Psalm lxviii. 6. † Psalm cxiii. 9.

Creator in a social manner. Man being essentially a social creature, his religion takes the forms of his nature, and becomes social.

Supposing the justice of these observations to be admitted, they conclude with the greatest force in favour of the obligation of family worship. Does the duty of social worship result from man's being placed in society? Here is the closest and most intimate society. Is it right that mercies received in common shall be publicly acknowledged; that the interposition of divine goodness we in common want should be implored in company with each other? Here is a perfect identity of wants and necessities; a closer conjunction of interests than can possibly subsist in any other situation. In an affectionate and well-ordered family, that quick sympathy is felt which pervades the members of the body: if one member suffer, all suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

No earthly blessing can befall the head of a family, in which its members do not share the benefit; no calamity can befall him, without spreading sadness and distress through the household. Whatever is suffered, or whatever is enjoyed, extends its influence through the whole circle. Whoever, consequently, reflects on the true foundation of social worship, must perceive that the arguments which evince its propriety, apply to the worship of families with still greater cogency, in proportion as the ties of domestic union are more close and intimate than all others. It is hardly possible to conceive of two individuals, who are actuated by a principle of true religion, passing years together under the same roof, without uniting in their addresses to a throne of grace. We feel a persuasion, that two such individuals, though nowise related to each other, will be led to signalize their union by acts of social piety, and that as they must often "hold sweet counsel together," so they will frequently be disposed to pour out their united supplications to God.

How much more may this be expected to take place betwixt those who are united in the close relation of

husbands and wives, parents and children! It most assuredly will, unless that ingredient in the character be wanting, which in the former instance was supposed,—a principle of real piety. Thus we perceive that family religion is the natural result of the social nature of man, when sanctified by divine grace; that it is, in truth, a most important branch of social religion. Viewed in that light, it is clearly comprehended within the extent of the injunction, of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."*

3. The duty we are recommending is enforced by its tendency, under the blessing of God, to form the minds of children and servants to the love and practice of religion. On those persons, if there be any such present, who look upon religion to be a delusive fancy, instead of the most important concern in the world, we despair of making any impression in this discourse: but with those who believe it to be the one thing needful, the consideration now mentioned will have considerable weight.

Nothing is more certain than that whatever we wish others to practise, we must exemplify in our conduct as well as enjoin. The truth of this observation extends to every branch of conduct without exception. Would we wish to impress on young persons a sound regard to veracity? we must maintain a strict regard to it in our own intercourse with mankind. Are we desirous to train up our families in the observation of the rules of justice? we must take care to signalize our attachment to it by exemplary uprightness in our own behaviour. In every department of moral and religious conduct, we must not only point out the path, but lead the way. The application of this remark to the subject in hand is extremely obvious. Your wish, we take it for granted, is to train up your children in the fear of the Lord, and, as a necessary [branch] of this, in the practice of prayer. Is it likely you will succeed in that wish while you neglect to afford them an example of what you wish them

* Eph. vi. 18.

to practise? What, under the blessing of divine grace, is so calculated to impress them with a conviction of the importance of prayer, as the being called, at stated intervals, to take part in your devout supplications to God? While they witness your constancy, assiduity, and fervour in this exercise, they cannot fail of acknowledging its importance, without avowing a contempt of parental example.

A household in which family prayer is devoutly attended to, conjoined with the reading of the Scriptures, is a school of religious instruction. The whole contents of the sacred volume are in due course laid open before its members. They are continually reminded of their relation to God and the Redeemer, of their sins, and their wants, and of the method they must take to procure pardon for the one and the relief of the other. Every day they are receiving "line upon line, and precept upon precept." A fresh accession is continually making to their stock of knowledge; new truths are gradually opened to their view, and the impressions of old truths revived. A judicious parent will naturally notice the most striking incidents in his family in his devotional addresses: such as the sickness, or death, or removal for a longer or shorter time, of the members of which it is composed. His addresses will be varied according to circumstances. Has a pleasing event spread joy and cheerfulness through the household? it will be noticed with becoming expressions of fervent gratitude. Has some calamity overwhelmed the domestic circle? it will give occasion to an acknowledgement of the divine equity; the justice of God's proceedings will be vindicated, and grace implored through the blood of the Redeemer, to sustain and sanctify the stroke.

When the most powerful feelings, and the most interesting circumstances, are thus connected with religion, it is not unreasonable to hope that, through divine grace, some lasting and useful impressions will be made. Is not some part of the good seed thus sown, and thus nurtured, likely to take root and to become fruitful? Deeply as we are convinced of the deplorable corruption of the

human heart, and the necessity, consequent on this, of divine agency to accomplish a saving purpose, we must not forget that God is accustomed to work by means; and surely none can be conceived more likely to meet the end. What can be so likely to impress a child with a dread of sin, as to hear his parent constantly deprecating the wrath of God as justly due to it; or to induce him to seek an interest in the mediation and intercession of the Saviour, as to hear him imploring it for him, day by day, with an importunity proportioned to the magnitude of the subject? By a daily attention on such exercises, children and servants are taught most effectually how to pray: suitable topics are suggested to their minds; suitable petitions are put into their mouths; while their growing acquaintance with the Scriptures furnishes the arguments by which they may "plead with God."

May I not appeal to you who have enjoyed the blessing of being trained up under religious parents, whether you do not often recall with solemn tenderness what you felt in domestic worship; how amiable your parent appeared interceding for you with God? His character appeared at such seasons doubly sacred, while you beheld in him not only the father, but the priest over his household; invested not only with parental authority, but with the beauty of holiness.

Where a principle of religion is not yet planted in the hearts of the young, family prayer, accompanied with the reading of the Scriptures, is, with the divine blessing, the most likely means of introducing it. Where it already subsists, it is admirably adapted to cherish, strengthen, and advance it to maturity: in the latter case it is like the morning and the evening dew at the root of the tender blade.

On the contrary, when there is no public acknowledgement of God in a family, nothing can be expected but that children and servants should grow up ignorant and careless of their highest concerns. You may pretend, indeed, that you are punctual in your private devotions; but, without observing that, this pretence, under

such circumstances, will seldom bear a rigorous examination. What is that part of your conduct that falls under the notice of your domestics, that distinguishes you from those unhappy persons who live without God in the world? If the Scriptures are not read, if your family is never convened for worship, no trace or vestige of religion remains. A stranger who sojourns in such a family will be tempted to exclaim, with much more truth and propriety than Abraham on another occasion, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place."

4. The practice of family worship may be expected to have a most beneficial influence on the character and conduct of the heads of families themselves. In common with other means of grace, it is reasonable to expect it will have this influence. Of all the means of grace, prayer is the most beneficial. But prayer under the circumstances we are now contemplating, is likely to be productive of advantages which deserve to be considered by themselves.

He who statedly invites others to be witnesses of his devotions, invites a peculiar inspection of his behaviour; and must be conscious to how much observation and contempt he lays himself open, should he betray a flagrant inconsistency between his prayers and his conduct. That parent who, morning and evening, summons his family to acts of devotion, is not, perhaps, distinctly aware of the total amount of the influence this circumstance has upon his mind. It will act as a continual monitor, and will impose useful restraint upon his behaviour. He recollects that he is about to assume an awful and venerable character in the eyes of his domestics—a character which must set the indulgence of a multitude of improprieties in a most glaring light. Is he in danger of being ensnared into indecent levity, or of contracting a habit of foolish jesting and talking? he recollects he is soon to appear as the mouth of his family in addressing the blessed God. Is he surrounded with temptations to an immoderate indulgence of his fleshly appetites in meats and drinks; should he yield to the temptation, how would he bear, in the eyes of his family, to appear on

his knees before God? Is he tempted to use harsh and provoking language to his children? he recollects he is in a few hours to bear them in his arms before the Lord. He is to commend his companion in life to the divine mercy and protection; how, then, can he be "bitter against her?" The case of his servants is to be shortly presented before God in social prayer: under such a recollection, it will surely not be difficult for him to forbear threatening, reflecting that he himself has a Master in heaven. Knowing that in the hearing of all his inmates he is about to bewail the corruptions of his nature, to implore pardon for his sins, and strength to resist temptation; will he not feel a double obligation, on this account, to struggle against that corruption, and anxiously to shun temptation? The punctual discharge of the duty we are contending for will naturally strengthen his sense of the obligation of domestic duties, forcibly remind him of what he owes to every member of the domestic circle, and cement the ties of conjugal and parental affection.

5. I proceed to notice a few of the probable pleas which will be urged for the neglect of this duty.

(1.) The most plausible I can think of is want of ability. To this it would not be easy to furnish a reply, did it absolutely require a degree of ability above the most ordinary measure. They who urge this plea may be conscious of their incapacity to become the mouth of others in extemporary prayer, but this is by no means necessary. Excellent forms, expressive of the wants and desires of all christian families, may be obtained, which, supposing the inability alleged to be real, ought by all means to be employed. We, as dissenters, for the most part use and prefer free prayer. But God forbid we should ever imagine this the only mode of prayer which is acceptable to God. We cannot doubt that multitudes of devout persons have used forms of devotion with great and eminent advantage. To present our desires before God, in reliance on the atonement of the Mediator, is the real end of prayer, [and] is equally acceptable, whether it be offered with or without a preconceived form of words.

The plea of mental inability will not stand the test of an examination, unless it include an incapacity to read; a case comparatively rare, and which, we hope, is continually becoming rarer, and applies to few instances of the neglect we are complaining of.

It is more than probable that those who complain of this inability have never made the trial, and, consequently, never can form any accurate judgement of their qualifications. Were you to make the attempt, beginning with the use of a form if absolutely necessary, and making variations and additions as your feelings may suggest, you would find the accomplishment of that gracious promise, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

If your omission of family prayer is accompanied with a similar neglect of private devotion, your situation is, indeed, deplorable; you are living "without God in the world." But supposing you to make conscience of private prayer, why not adopt the same method in domestic worship, with the addition of such petitions as the circumstance of its greater publicity may require? Beware lest a secret disaffection to God, a secret enmity to his person and his ways, lies at the foundation of this apology. It wears a show of humility, but it is but a mere shadow of it without the substance.

(2.) Another class of persons are ready to admit the propriety and utility of this practice, but allege that such is the variety and multitude of their worldly avocations, that they cannot spare the time requisite for this exercise. Let such be urged to remember that the time necessary for the purpose we are recommending is very small—five minutes will suffice for reading an ordinary chapter; [not many more for the utterance of a fervent] prayer; so that the exercise, morning and evening, need occupy little, if any thing, more than half an hour. And is this a space too much to be allotted, in the most busy life, for an exercise so sacred in its obligation, and so replete with advantage as this has been shown to be? Where is the man so incessantly occupied as not to allow himself more leisure than this, frequently, if not

habitually; that does not allot more time to objects of confessedly inferior magnitude?

In addition to what has been advanced, it would not be difficult to prove that no loss of time will usually result; for what may seem a loss will be more than compensated by that spirit of order and regularity which the stated observance of this duty tends to produce. It will serve as an edge and border to preserve the web of life from unravelling; it will tend to keep every thing in its proper place and [time]; and this practice will naturally introduce a similar regularity into other employments.

Consider for a moment on what principle does the plea of want of time depend. Plainly on this: that religion is not the grand concern; that there is something more important than the service of God; that the pleasing and glorifying of our Maker is not the great end of human existence;—a fatal delusion, a soul-destroying mistake, which militates against the whole spirit of the gospel, and presumptuously impeaches the wisdom of that Saviour who exclaimed, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

(3.) Another class will perhaps reply, "We are convinced of the urgent obligation of the duty which has been recommended; but we have so long neglected it that we know not how to begin,—are ashamed at the prospect of the surprise, the curiosity, it will occasion.

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But there is much impiety in this shame; and if it be permitted to deter you from complying with the dictates of conscience and the commands of God, it will unquestionably class you with "the fearful and unbelieving, who shall have their portion in the second death." To be ashamed of the service of Christ is to be ashamed of Christ and his cross; and you have heard the divine denunciation of judgement on such characters. "Whoso-

* Matt. vi. 33.

ever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."* You are afraid of presenting yourself under a singular aspect to your domestics and acquaintance: have you not reflected on the awful and trying situation in which you will be placed by the infliction of the sentence, justly merited, "Of him will I be ashamed;" "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee?"

II. Hints on the practice. Best mode of performing it.

1. Let it ever be joined with reading the Scriptures.
2. Let it be constant.
3. Attend with a full decision of mind, with the utmost seriousness.
4. Seek the aid of the Spirit.

XXVII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE INEVITABLE LOT OF HUMAN LIFE.

Eccles. xi. 8.—*If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many.*

There is nothing better established by universal observation, than that the condition of man upon earth is, less or more, an afflicted condition: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."† As the sparks ascend by an immutable law in nature, so the sorrows to which we are exposed spring from necessity, from causes whose operation is unavoidable and universal. Look through all the generations of man, throughout all times and places, and see if you can discover a single individual who has not, at one period or another, been ex-

* Mark viii. 38 † Job v. 7.

posed to the arrows of adversity. The roll or record of human destiny is written "within and without, with lamentation and mourning, and woe."*

We are naturally extremely and immoderately attached to worldly enjoyments and to temporal prospects. Our souls cleave to them with an eagerness extremely disproportioned to their real value, which is one of the maledictions incurred by the fall. The curse denounced upon the earth for man's sake has contracted the sum of earthly good within a narrow compass, and blasted it with much vanity; but has not had the effect of dispelling the charm by which it engages our affections. It is a part of the misery of man, in his fallen state, that he has become more attached than ever to the world, now that it has lost its value. Having swerved from God, and lost his true centre, he has fallen into an idolatry of the world, and makes it the exclusive object of his attachment, even at the very time that its beauty is marred and its satisfactions impaired.

"It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun."† While the sun of earthly prospects shines, we are apt to feel the day of evil at a distance from our minds; we are reluctant to admit the possibility of a change of scene; we shut out the thought of calamity and distress as an unwelcome intruder.

The young revel in the enjoyment of health, and exult in the gay hopes and enchanting gratifications suited to that delightful [season], as though they were never to know a period. Amused and transported with [their] situation and [their] prospects, it is with extreme difficulty they admit the conviction that the days are fast approaching when they shall confess they have no pleasure in them. "Let us enjoy the good things that are present." "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us." "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered."‡

* Ezek. ii. 10. † Eccles. xi. 7.
‡ Wisdom of Solomon ii. 8.

Experience, in most cases, soon alters their sentiments, and events arise which impress an indelible conviction of the short duration of earthly good. The bloom of health is blasted by disease; the seeds of some incurable malady begin to shoot up, and make their appearance; or the agony of disappointed passions is impressed; or cares and anxieties begin to corrode the mind; or the hand of death [inflicts] some fatal stroke, by which the object of the tenderest affection is snatched away.

If a long course of prosperity has been enjoyed, during which almost every thing has succeeded to the wish, (which sometimes, though very rarely, occurs,) the confidence in worldly hopes and prospects is mightily increased; the mind is more softened and enervated by an uninterrupted series of prosperity, and is the more unfitted to [go through] those scenes of distress which inevitably await him. He who is in this situation is tempted to say, "I shall surely die in my nest:"* or, in the language of the rich man in the gospel, "Soul, eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast goods laid up for many years."†

The whole system of worldly amusement is adapted to make us forget the real condition of human life, to disguise every object, and to invest the present state with a sort of theatrical glow. It is contrived, in every part of it, to banish reflection, to hide the future from the view, and to make us overlook the evils of life, and the realities of eternity. But still, as the nature of things remains the same, as the course of human events can no more be arrested than the tide, the only effect of this voluntary infatuation is, to render the stroke of calamity, when it does fall, doubly heavy, by leaving the soul without preparation and without resources. "Their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind."‡ The lot of mankind is, sooner or later, a state of suffering, from which no past successes, no seeming stability in our station, can possibly secure.

* Job xxix. 18. † Luke xii. 19. ‡ Prov. i. 27.

"Though a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity."*

It is wisdom, then, to form a just estimate of human life; to correct the illusions of our passions; and to regulate our expectations respecting the good and evil of the present, by the result of universal observation and experience. It is Solomon, that model of a great and prosperous prince, whose [mental] attainments, exalted station, and extraordinary prosperity, combined to confer upon him, as far as possible, an exemption from suffering, who, under the dictate of the Holy Spirit, penned these words, "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many."

Let us proceed briefly to consider what improvement should be made of this view of human life, of this universal exposure to affliction.

I. The first lesson it should teach us is, that we are not in the situation in which man was first formed. The original destination of man was not a state of suffering. When God first formed the world, on surveying all that he had created, he pronounced it to be "very good."† If it now be very evil, there must be a change in the state and condition of *mankind*, since the Supreme Being is immutable. It would be utterly repugnant to his perfections to doom an innocent creature to so much suffering; and the Word of God expressly declares "he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men."‡ Hence, calamities are styled chastisements throughout the Scriptures, and are invariably spoken of as expressions of the divine anger. Under the administration of a wise and holy Being, had there been no sin, there would have been no suffering. Tyrants may delight in displaying their power over their vassals, by inflicting upon them unmerited punishments; but, far be it from us to suspect such conduct in "the Holy One of Israel,"§ in Him who "delighteth in mercy."||

* Eccles. xi. 8. † Gen. i. 31. ‡ Lam. iii. 33.
§ Ezek. xxxix. 7. || Mic. vii. 18

The unspeakable calamities to which we are exposed, in our passage through life, announce our fallen state; nor is it possible to give any consistent account of them, without referring them, as the word of God uniformly does, to our original defection and departure from God. In this light his conduct in afflicting them appears unexceptionably just and proper. We "have forsaken the fountain of living water,"* and it is just that the "cisterns" to which we repair should be "broken." We have served and loved "the creature more than the Creator;"† and it is just that created comforts should be imbittered. We have virtually declared by our conduct, that there is no happiness to be found in God: how fitting is it that he should declare 'You shall find it nowhere else;' how equitable is it that he who leans upon an "arm of flesh,"‡ instead of trusting in the living God, should often [find] it to be a broken reed, which wounds him who stays himself upon it, instead of affording him support! When we consider what a scene of indescribable distress the state of the world presents at this moment;—the devastation of [nations]; the sudden reverses of fortune in the highest ranks; and the penury, embarrassment, and distress in the lower;—who does not see [in these] the tokens of the [divine] displeasure; who can fail to perceive the marks of a fallen state, and that the Lord has a controversy, by which he pleads with all flesh?

We have all been guilty of spiritual idolatry, and the Lord, in his justice, spreads our carcases before the objects of our guilty attachment. "At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they

* Jer. ii. 13. † Rom. i. 25. ‡ Jer. xvii. 5.

have worshipped."* Let us no longer regard the calamities of life as the offspring of chance, or the product of blind necessity, but, agreeably to the oracles of God, as the judgements of the Lord.

II. Let the consideration of the universal exposure of man to calamities and sufferings prevent our being surprised or astonished when it becomes our own lot. When we are unexpectedly led into scenes of trial, we are apt to be filled with emotion, "as though some strange thing had happened unto us;"† and perhaps are tempted to suspect that we are treated with an unjustifiable rigour. We are ready, too often, to draw invidious comparisons between ourselves and those who, we suppose, are dealt with in a more favourable manner; and secretly to say, Why am I thus afflicted and distressed; why am I set as a mark for his arrows? It might be sufficient, in order to repress such emotions, to remember that the Lord is a sovereign who gives no account of his matters: shall the thing formed say to him that formed him, "Why hast thou made me thus?" "Who art thou that repliest against God?"‡ "Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"§ We must be strangely unacquainted with ourselves, if we are not aware, that he has corrected us less than our iniquities deserve. These considerations, however, though not slight, are not the only ones which are fitted to calm the tumult of the breast. We may, with advantage to ourselves, and unitedly with the most perfect benevolence, cast our eyes abroad, to contemplate the universality of distress. We are not the only or the greatest sufferers: we have innumerable companions in tribulation. Without giving scope to imagination, or quitting the realities of life, we may easily find among our fellow-creatures instances of deeper woe, and more complicated distresses, than those which we feel. Here we may see a person, like Job, flourishing in affluence, and reduced, by a sudden and unexpected stroke, to the depth of penury.

* Jer. viii. 1, 2. † 1 Pet. iv. 12.
‡ Rom. ix. 20. § Lam. iii. 39.

There we may behold another, like the same illustrious sufferer, deprived in a very short season of all his offspring by death. There we see the widowed mother of a numerous family at a loss to still the cries of her children who are clamorous for bread. If we turn in another quarter, we may find a poor unhappy creature wasting away under an incurable and painful disorder, where the only vigorous principle seems to be the living cancer which corrodes him. Hear the bitter lamentation of Job: "Even to-day is my complaint bitter, and my stroke heavier than my groaning."* "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro."† "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!" "therefore my words are swallowed up." "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit."‡ Hear the man after God's own heart exclaim, "I water my couch with my tears,§ and mingle my drink with weeping."‖ "By reason of grief my flesh is dried up, and my heart is withered as grass."¶ Look at the history, not of the enemies only, but of the most eminent servants of God, and you will generally find their trials as conspicuous as their piety: so true is it that the high road to heaven is through suffering; and that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom."**

If we are tempted to repine at seeing others in peace and prosperity, while we are harassed and distressed, we form a most inadequate and premature judgement. Their period of trial will arrive; their day of calamity is also approaching; the mildew that blights their enjoyments is prepared; and from the evil omen of adversity it will be impossible for them to escape, more than ourselves. "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many."

* Job xxiii. 2. † Job vii. 4. ‡ Job vi. 2, 3, 4.
Psalm vi. 6. ‖ Psalm cii. 9. ¶ Psalm cii. 4.
** Acts xiv. 22.

III. Here we learn the propriety of not .ooking for happiness on earth. "This is not our rest: it is polluted."* A state exposed to so much calamity can never have been designed as the scene of enjoyment; it must have been calculated for the purpose of trial. It is not Canaan; it is the wilderness through which the chosen tribes were destined to pass in their way to it; it is a vale of tears, [along] which the christian pilgrim toils and struggles in his passage to the heavenly kingdom. Let us understand the real nature of our present condition; let us learn that nothing belonging to it is merely or principally intended for our gratification; that it is well suited to be the abode of a sinful creature upon trial, under a dispensation of mercy; where there is just enough of good to support under evil, and those prospects of greater good afforded in a future state, which are sufficient to dispel despondency. It is a condition characterized by vicissitude, by danger, by suffering, and by hope; and he is to be esteemed the happiest man who most surmounts its tempests, escapes its pollutions, and is sanctified by its trials. Are you at present in circumstances of ease and comfort? be thankful for it, but place no reliance on its continuance. Enjoy with moderation whatever is gratifying in your lot, but let it not engage your heart, let it not deeply entangle your affection. By an intimate converse with the promises of the gospel, learn to live above [the world], and consider it not as [constituting] your portion or your happiness. Study, indeed to the utmost to be dead to the world, and alive to God; that "when he, who is our life, shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in glory."†

IV. Let us all be engaged to lay in a suitable preparation for the days of adversity. Let us be aiming to acquire, by faith and prayer, and the diligent perusal of the Scriptures, those principles which will effectually support us in the dark and cloudy day.

The christian character is [formed] of such dispositions as are each of them apart, and still more when

* Micah ii. 10. † Col. iii. 4.

combined, adapted to support the soul amidst the severest trials. Under the influence of these, the christian believer fears none of those things that may happen. Faith, by elevating the attention to a future world—to the glory to be revealed, by imparting to the real christian a living sense of that atonement which is given in the gospel, is a principle of primary efficacy. The habitual disposition to look upon this present state as a passage and a pilgrimage, which is deeply wrought into the christian character, is of itself an admirable preparation for suffering. The solemn renunciation of the world included in this [impression] of the [mind] tends immediately to the same effect. Thus the joys of faith, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, raise the soul to a surprising elevation above the storms and trials of life.

XXVIII.

ON CHASTISEMENT RESULTING IN PENITENCE.

JER. xxxi. 18.—*Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.*

THIS chapter contains great and gracious promises made to the people of Israel upon the prospect of their true repentance. They are assured that, notwithstanding the severe rebukes of Providence, the Lord had mercy in reserve, when their afflictions had answered the purpose for which they were appointed, in humbling and reforming them,

Before God visits his people with consolation, he prepares them for it by inspiring a penitential spirit; well knowing that to indulge them with his smiles, while they continue obstinate and unreclaimed, would neither comport with his character, nor contribute to their good. His benignity, and condescension are sufficiently evinced in his "waiting to be gracious;" in the promptitude with which he pardons the humble penitent. He shows

himself attentive to the first movement of the contrite heart agreeable to his declaration in the passage before us, "I have surely heard Ephraim." In these words we have the picture of the inmost feelings of a humble and penitent heart. We behold it in the deepest retirement, without the least disguise, pouring itself out before God.

In these remarkable words we have an acknowledgement and a prayer.

I. These words contain an acknowledgement—"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke."

1. This expression we conceive to denote the inefficacy of former corrections. In the Septuagint it is rendered, "As a bullock, I was not taught: thou didst chastise me, and I was chastised." This was all; and no other effect ensued than the uneasy pain which chastisement necessarily imparts. Ephraim is represented as conscious that former corrections had answered little purpose. He laments the little improvement he had made, and prays for such an interposition of divine power and grace as may work an efficient conversion: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." The rebukes of Providence are often represented in the Scriptures in this light.—"And ye have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

Since afflictive dispensations "spring not from the dust," but are ordained of God, who takes no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures, nor "willingly afflicts the children of men;"†—since a state of innocence would have included an exemption from every sorrow on the one hand, and the sufferings of life are not, for the most part, destructive,—there is no light in which it is so natural to consider them as chastisements; which are effects of displeasure, but not of a displeasure intended for the destruction of its object, but the amendment.

* Heb. xii. 5, 6. † Lam. iii. 33.

2. Though corrections are calculated to produce amendment, though such is their tendency and design, it is evident, from observation and experience, they often fail in accomplishing the effect. It is not uncommon to see men hardened under rebukes, and to grow more bold and presumptuous in the commission of sin, after having experienced severer trials than before. This melancholy fact is of no recent observation; it is frequently described and lamented in the word of God. "Thou hast stricken them," says Jeremiah, "but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock: they have refused to return."*

Of the inefficacy of mere external correction, we have a striking proof in the conduct of the generations who were conducted from Egypt under the hand of Moses. Never were a people more frequently or more severely corrected, and never did a people [show] themselves more incorrigible. While the remembrance of their sufferings was fresh, they seemed disposed in earnest to seek God; but no sooner did the sense of their calamities wear off, than they relapsed into all their former disobedience and rebellion. "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue."† This is but a picture of what we may observe every day. We see men, under afflictive dispensations, evince a degree of emotion; they appear, in some measure, humbled and convinced; and, with much apparent sincerity, confess their persuasion of the vanity of the world, and of the utter impossibility of finding happiness out of the ways of religion. If they are brought to the brink of the grave, and eternity presents itself to their immediate prospect, we find them making the most solemn resolutions, condemning their former course of life, and resolving, if spared, to enter on

* Jer. v. 3. † Psalm lxxviii. 34—36.

a new course. The frivolous objects which before engaged their attention seem to have lost their charm, and a flattering prospect is exhibited of their turning into the path of wisdom. From their subsequent conduct, however, it is manifest their passions were only laid asleep, while their principles continued unchanged. The influence of the world was suspended, not destroyed. The novelty of their situation put new thoughts into their minds, and awakened fears to which before they had been strangers. But as the whole impression was to be ascribed to circumstances, when these circumstances were changed, the mind returned to its former state. Their "goodness was as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, which passeth away." The serious impressions they felt during the season of affliction were never followed up. They terminated in no regular attachment to the serious exercises of piety; or, if they were led to pray at all, they were not sufficiently deep and abiding to produce a perseverance in that duty. The recovery of health, or the return of prosperity gradually, but speedily, effaced every trace of serious feeling, and left them, perhaps, in a state of deeper alienation from God than ever.

3. Ephraim is here represented as reflecting upon it. (Proximate causes of the inefficacy of correction by itself.)

4. Inattention to the hand of God, and, as a natural consequence, their neglecting to pass from the contemplation of their sufferings to their sins. Religion begins with consideration. Till they are brought to thorough reflection, no real improvement can be expected. It was a frequent complaint with the Messiah, "My people will not consider." "The Lord crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."* If we consider affliction as springing from the dust, and content ourselves with looking only at secondary causes, or human instruments, no wonder, * * * * * *

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* Micah vi. 9

Men are apt to spare themselves; to give way to a dangerous pusillanimity, by shrinking from reflections which, however useful in their tendency, they find to be painful. They are apt to consider their sufferings as expiatory.

5. In the serious purpose of a religious life, formed under afflictive dispensations, too many depend entirely upon resolutions formed in their own strength. To such purposes may be applied the beautiful image of Nahum: "As the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known."*

II. The prayer,—"Turn thou me," [may be] enforced by such arguments as these:—

1. The plea of necessity. There is no other resource. It is evident something is wanting, some divine [agency], which shall produce the effect which external events have failed to [produce].

2. To entreat God to turn is not to ask an impossibility. The residue of the Spirit is with him.

3. It is worthy of his interposition. The turning the heart is a fit occasion on which Omnipotence may act.

4. The plea may be enforced by precedents. It implies no departure from his known methods.

5. We may enforce it by a reference to the divine [mercy].

XXIX.

ON THE COMFORTS OF CHRISTIANS UNDER EITHER WORLDLY OR SPIRITUAL TRIALS.

PSALM xciv. 19.—*In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.*†

LET us take a brief survey of the internal thoughts, of a distressing nature, which are apt to arise in the mind of a good man; and next observe the tendency of the

* Nahum iii. 17. † Preached at Leicester, December, 1815.

comforts of the gospel, to assuage or remove the uneasiness which they have occasioned.

I. Let us take a survey of some of the distressing thoughts which are apt to oppress the mind of a good man. They may be considered as relating to these objects; the state of the world, the state of the church, and his own state as an individual.

1. The state of the world. When a good man surveys the general prevalence of irreligion and impiety, when he considers how few there are, comparatively, who seek after God, or are moved by any impression of a serious nature, he cannot but be affected. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law."* When again, he considers whither such a course must tend, and in what it will possibly issue, the prospect is still more alarming. It is no want of charity to suspect that the greater part of mankind fall short of the condition of salvation; it is the very consequence of submission to the authority of revelation. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."†

2. The state of the church. The palpable inconsistency between the lives of numerous professors of religion, and the real import of that profession. The many instances of gross immorality which are found in the christian church, [supply] the subject of much distressing reflection to the sincere follower of Christ. It was to St. Paul: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." The injury sustained by the divine honour, the discredit reflected on the gospel from this quarter, surpasses calculation.

The obstructions permitted to present themselves to the propagation of divine truth are of a sinister tendency, and give birth to many a painful reflection in the minds of such as have the interest of Zion at heart. In how many instances is the introduction of saving light prevented by the exercise of intolerance, while the most detestable corruption and idolatry are sanctioned and upheld by the same means? In how many instances have the fairest prospects of good been suddenly blasted by superior power, the faint embers of the true religion almost extinguished, and its possessors exposed to all the severities of persecution?

* Psalm cxix. 158, 53. † Matt. vii. 13

Such is the state of the protestants in [the south of] France at this moment.* From an authentic statement, lately sent me, it appears that they are treated with the utmost cruelty, compelled to quit their habitations, hunted and driven like wild beasts; infants are torn from their mothers, in order to be initiated into the mysteries of antichrist; and, in some instances, whole families are massacred. Who can fail to be affected? So contrary to recent expectation, so offensively repugnant to the design of Providence, and the dictates of prophecy, who can fail to exclaim with the pious Joshua—"What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread?"†

3. Uneasy thoughts arising from his state as an individual. "Every heart knows his own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith."

Here we may briefly [advert to] trials of a worldly, and trials of a spiritual, nature.

(1.) Under the first of these, religion neither demands nor boasts a perfect insensibility. The inspired psalmist displayed a great vicissitude of feeling, arising from this quarter; he mourned under the calumny and oppression of his enemies, and gave utterance to cries and tears under his affliction. He felt with agonized poignancy the insults he met with on account of his pious confidence in God: "As with a sword in my bones, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"‡ The personal and domestic sufferings of Job are familiar to your recollection, and are penned [that they may] be monuments, to all ages, of the severity with which God

* Viz. in 1815. See note, p. 307. † Psalm liii. 4. ‡ Ps. xlii. 10.

sanctifies and tries his people, and of the happy and infallible issue.

(2.) Uneasy thoughts arise on a spiritual account. With a good man, his spiritual [welfare] is always an object of his first solicitude; so that when he contemplates the holiness and purity of God, he cannot but have, at times, many a serious inquiry how he shall appear before him. When he surveys his own pollution and guilt, the thought of appearing before God is one upon which he can scarcely dwell without secret trembling: "What if I shall be weighed in the balance and found wanting?" When we consider our low attainments, in religion compared with our opportunities, our latent corruption, and our frequent miscarriages and failures, we are often tempted to call in question the reality of our religion, and to fear that, after all, we are only "almost christians." If I am truly regenerate, and a child of God why am I thus? Why such a mixture of earthly and sensual affections? Whence such coldness and deadness in religious exercises? Why so little delight in the Scriptures,—so little complacency? "My soul cleaveth unto the dust."*

(3.) Under desertion, under the hidings of God s countenance, how many painful thoughts arise! how ready to indulge despondency, and to fear he will never be merciful any more!

(4.) In the prospect before him; in the contemplation of the dangers and temptations which still await him; while he feels in himself nothing but frailty and weakness, how apt is he to apprehend some fatal overthrow! It seems almost too much for him to expect to be more than conqueror; that he shall be able to make his way through such a host of enemies, and pass into the celestial city. He seems to feel himsel totally devoid of that spiritual strength and vigour which are requisite for such combats, which are necessary to enable him to vanquish such difficulties. He is ready to cry, "I shall never see that goodly mountain and Lebanon; I shall never see the king in his beauty, nor behold that land which is so far off."

* Psalm cxix. 25.

II. Let us briefly notice the consolations of God opposed to these uneasy thoughts.

1. We first adverted to such as arise from the disordered state of the world.

On this subject great consolation springs from the conviction that the Lord reigneth. There sit at the helm infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. These perfections are of such a nature that renders it impossible for them to lie dormant or inactive: they are in perpetual operation; and, in the final result, they will appear with ineffable splendour and beauty.

"Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne." Under the administration of such a Being, all events will infallibly terminate well,—well for the interests of his glory, and well for the interests of his people.

With whatever [uneasiness] we may contemplate the prevalence of moral disorder, and its portentous effects in a future state, the page of revelation assures us, that ultimately the world will be filled with holy and happy creatures; that religion and virtue will prove triumphant; and that all nations shall see the glory of God, and worship at his footstool. And with respect to the final state of the wicked, there is every reason to conclude that their numbers will bear no proportion to those of the blessed, and that thus no more misery will be inflicted than what will be rendered conducive to the order and happiness of the universe.

2. Under painful apprehensions respecting the state of the church, the comforts of God are neither few nor small. It behoves us, on such occasions, to reflect that it is incomparably more his care than ours; that as the Saviour bought it with his blood, he will not fail to guide and govern it in the best manner possible. He has promised "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." His interpositions in its favour afford a pledge of what he will still accomplish: "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba for thee. Since thou wast precious

in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life."*

Afflictions [are] designed to purify the church.

3. Under the distressing thoughts arising from the state of a christian, as an individual, the divine comforts are proposed.

In temporal affliction and privations, how consoling is it to reflect that they are all ordered in infinite wisdom, and proceed from the purest benignity; that they will issue in our advantage, and that they will be but of short duration. This, may the afflicted christian reflect, is not an eternal state; these afflictions are but for a moment. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."†

XXX.

ON HUMILITY BEFORE GOD.

JAMES iv. 10.—*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.*

IN that portion of his epistle to which these words belong, we find that James is addressing, not the professed christians, but their avowed enemies and persecutors, probably his countrymen, who still continued to display the highest antipathy to christianity. "Whence," says he, "come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye desire, and have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"‡

As the persons who were the objects of these remarks were, unquestionably, utterly estranged from the christian religion, and the enemies of God, it is evident the

* Isaiah xliii. 3, 4. † Psalm xxx. 5. ‡ James iv. 1—4.

duty inculcated in the words under our present notice, enters into the first elements of christian piety. It is reported of the celebrated Austin of Hippo, that being asked what was the first thing in religion, he said, "Humility;" when asked what was the second, he answered, "Humility;" and what was the third, he still returned the same answer, "Humility;"—alluding to the celebrated answer which the Athenian orator is said to have made on the subject of eloquence. It seemed to have been the intention of that great man to insinuate, that lowliness of mind, in the full extent of its operation, included nearly the whole of practical religion.

Humility may be considered in two views; either as it respects the Divine Being, or as it respects our fellow-creatures,—humility before God, or as it affects our sentiments and conduct towards men. But, while this distinction is admitted, it must be carefully remembered, that it is no longer a christian virtue than when it originates in just conceptions of the great Parent of the universe; that the basis of all social excellence, of a moral nature, is in a right state of the heart towards God. The virtues which are severed from that stock will soon languish and decay; and as they are destitute of proper principle, so are they neither stable nor permanent.

In this discourse we shall confine ourselves to the consideration of humility, in its aspect towards the Supreme Being; or, in other words, humility before God. It may be defined as consisting in that profound, habitual conviction of our nothingness, guilt, and pollution before God, which a just knowledge of ourselves will necessarily inspire. It is the rectitude of this conviction, it is its perfect conformity to the real nature of things, which renders it the object of divine approbation. It is the agreement betwixt the lowliness of our minds and the debasement of our character, and the depression of our state, which invests it with all its beauty, and all its value. The gracious notice which this disposition attracts is not owing to any intrinsic excellence in the object, any more than in lofty sentiments connected with a reflection on ourselves; but solely because a deep hu-

miliation coincides with our true state and characters, as surveyed by the eye of Omniscience. In a word, it is the justness and the correctness of the feelings and convictions which enter into the composition of a humble mind, which give it all its worth.

Pride is the growth of blindness and darkness; humility, the product of light and knowledge; and while the former has its origin in a mistaken and delusive estimate of things, the latter is as much the offspring of truth, as it is the parent of virtue.

Let it be observed, that the disposition under consideration is not an occasional feeling arising from some sudden and momentary impulse; it is not a transitory depression, produced by some unexpected disclosure: in the good man, it is an habitual state of feeling; it is the quality in which his mind is uniformly attired; he is "clothed with humility." Wide and diffusive as its operation is, some conception of it may be formed by attending to the following observations:—

1. Humility in the sight of God will have a powerful influence on all our thoughts and reflections; on ourselves, on our character, condition, and prospects: a sense of inherent meanness and unworthiness in the sight of God will adhere closely to us, and will insensibly, and without effort, mingle with every recollection of the Supreme Being. A sort of self-annihilation before him will be natural and habitual; and by a recollection of his majesty, and a consciousness of our utter unworthiness to appear in his presence, we shall be no strangers to that ingenuous shame which will scarcely permit us to lift up our eyes to heaven. Under the influence of this principle, we shall be more apt to think of our faults than our virtues; of the criminal defects with which we are chargeable, than of any pretensions to excellence we may suppose ourselves to possess.

Our faults are our own; they originate entirely in ourselves; to us belong all their demerit and their shame: while, for whatever inherent good we may possess, we are indebted to divine grace, which has alone made us to differ. While there is none to share with

us the baseness and turpitude of our sinful actions, our virtues are to be ultimately traced to a source out of ourselves. Hence, whatever is wrong in our dispositions and conduct lays a foundation for unmingled humiliation; what is of an opposite nature supplies no pretext for unmingled self-complacency. Besides, it requires but little attention to perceive that our sins admit of no apology, while our highest attainments in holiness are accompanied by much imperfection: so that, while every pretension to merit is defeated, our demerits are real and substantial. True humbleness of mind will dispose us to form that correct estimate of ourselves, which can only result from an attention to the heart; the secret movements of which we may often perceive to be irregular and depraved, where the external conduct is correct; and innumerable pollutions and disorders may be detected there, by Him, "who seeth in secret," when all that is visible to man is innocent and laudable.

Here a prospect is opened to the contemplation of humble piety, which suggests occasion of abasement and humility before God, where [our friends] see nothing but matter of commendation and applause. It is this habit of inspecting the interior of the character, and of carrying the animadversions of conscience to the inmost thoughts and imaginations of the heart, that accounts for that unfailing lowliness and humility before God which is the constant appendage of exalted piety; and which reconciles the highest elevations of religion with the depths of self-abasement. This is sufficient to preserve alive a constant sense of deficiency in the most advanced christian; to scatter every idea of "having already attained," and of "being already perfect;" and to urge him to press forward towards the prize with unabating ardour. This was the spirit of the great apostle of the Gentiles,* and of the most illustrious heroes in the cause of Christ.

The self-reflective faculty is, by the constitution of our minds, so incessantly active, and the idea of self of such

* Phil. iii. 12–14.

frequent occurrence, that its effect on the character must be extremely different, according as it turns to the view its fairest or its darkest side. The habit on which we now speak, of directing the attention to criminal defects rather than to the excellencies of the character, is not only the dictate of humility; it is the absolute suggestion of prudence. Excellencies are not inspired by being often contemplated. He who delights to survey them, contributes nothing by that exercise to their prosperity or growth; on the contrary, he will be tempted to rest in the self-complacency they inspire, and to relax his efforts for improvement. Their purity and lustre are best preserved in a state of seclusion from the gaze even of the possessor. But, with respect to the faults and imperfections with which we are encompassed, it is just the reverse;—the more they are reflected on, the more fully they are detected and exposed, the greater is the probability that their growth will be impeded, and a virtuous resolution evinced to extirpate and subdue them. To think much upon our sins and imperfections, is to turn ourselves to that quarter in which our business lies. Meditating much on our virtues and good deeds is a useless occupation, since they will thrive best when abandoned to a partial oblivion.

Some consciousness, indeed, [in the christian] of his possessing the features of a renovated mind, and even of a progress in the practice of piety, is almost unavoidable, and is not without its use, inasmuch as it supplies a motive to gratitude, and a source of consolation; but the moment he finds himself drawing a self-complacency from such a retrospect, the enlightened christian is alarmed, nor will he suffer himself to dwell long upon an object, the survey of which is so replete with danger. He hastens to check himself in that delusive train of reflection, and to recall to his [mind the persuasion] that he has "not yet attained, nor is already perfect." The recollection that he is a fallen creature, exposed to righteous indignation; that his sins, though remitted, can never cease to be his, nor to retain all their turpitude and demerit; and that he is, whatever his attainments, still

a child of disobedience, and a pensioner on mercy;—the constant remembrance of these solemn and momentous truths, is sufficient to preserve a perpetual humiliation in the sight of God.

2. Humility before God will have a beneficial influence on the mind in which divine truth is contemplated, and its discoveries received. He who is humble before God, will be so conscious of his utter insufficiency to explain the mysteries of religion, that he will be inexpressibly thankful for divine communications. He will feel and recognize his absolute need of a guide in the momentous concerns of eternity. In the obscurity of reason, heightened by the perplexities of guilt, he will distinctly perceive his entire dependence upon Heaven for every ray of information respecting the great concern of reconciliation with the offended Deity; and while he disclaims all pretension to a title to the divine favour, he will be instantly convinced, that to solve the problem, "How man shall be just with God," must ever surpass the powers of finite reason.

Humility is the best preparation for studying the oracles of God, by destroying our confidence in every other teacher. "The meek will he guide in judgement: the meek will he teach his way."*

It is scarcely possible to conceive a greater presumption than those are guilty of who decide beforehand what it is fit and proper for revelation to communicate, and pertinaciously reject every doctrine, however clearly and unequivocally asserted, which is repugnant to their previous anticipations; as though we possessed some independent source of information sufficiently clear and determinate to limit and control the supernatural suggestions of divine truth. The supposition on which this conduct proceeds is utterly false and preposterous. Independently of revelation, we have no data from which we can infer the purposes of God, or the method of his dealing with fallen creatures. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath in-

* Psalm xxv. 9.

structed him?"* None knoweth "the things of God, but the Spirit of God."†

On the supposition we are combating, what necessity is there for revelation at all, since the pretension of being able to ascertain the contents of revelation beforehand, implies a previous degree of knowledge, which makes the illumination of scripture come too late? The necessity of revelation is founded on the supposition of insuperable ignorance; the power of ascertaining its subsequent discoveries is founded on knowledge; and the two suppositions destroy each other.

The usual pretence for rejecting some of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel is, their mysterious nature; or, in other words, the impossibility of comprehending them in their full extent. That nothing that is repugnant to the plain dictates of reason can claim belief, is readily admitted, because impossibilities are not the objects of power, even supposing it to be infinite; but the mysteries of the gospel are not of this nature. They include, it is true, something which we cannot fully comprehend; but they contain nothing which the legitimate exercise of reason perceives to be absurd: they surpass the limits of reason, without doing violence to its dictates. And what is more natural to expect than that the communications of Infinite Wisdom should unfold objects to our view, which, in all their bearing and extent, transcend the feeble powers of a worm; or that assertions respecting the mode of divine existence, and the counsels of eternity, will be found, in the volume of revelation, most remote from our previous conjectures? The grandeur of God, the awful unfathomable depths of his wisdom, and the mysteriousness of his essence, would lead rather to a contrary supposition. Humility in the sight of God will at once scatter these chimeras, and bow the mind to the profoundest submission to divine teaching. He who knows himself will be prostrate in the presence of Infinite Majesty, and say, in the language of an eminent

* Rom. xi. 34. 1 Cor. ii. 16. † 1 Cor. ii. 11.

saint, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Far from measuring the communications of heaven by the standard of a preconceived hypothesis, he will attend, with child-like simplicity, to the oracles of God, and endeavour to subject "every thought and imagination to the obedience of Christ." He will abandon himself, with the utmost alacrity, to the directions of an infallible guide. He will permit "the deep things of God" to be unfolded by that Spirit which alone is able to search them, conscious that in the concerns of eternity "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."*

With a mind truly humble, the great principle which pervades the gospel will be found peculiarly congenial; and what is this but the principle of grace? The whole system of the gospel is emphatically "the gospel of the grace of God."† It is an exhibition of unmerited favour to a guilty and perishing world; and all the blessings which it proposes to bestow, all the hopes it inspires, are ascribed to this as its origin. Every idea of human desert is anxiously excluded, while the whole provision which it makes for the wants, the whole relief it affords to the misery of man, is ascribed solely to this source. To [exhibit] to the view "of principalities and powers in heavenly places," the riches of divine grace, is its avowed end and purpose. If he has "raised us up together with Christ, and made us to sit down with him in heavenly places," it is "that he may show forth to the ages to come the surpassing riches of his grace in his kindness toward us by Jesus Christ."‡ In every stage of the stupendous undertaking "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."§

It is the triumph and preeminence of grace that forms the distinguishing character of the christian system, and which produces that insuperable disgust with which it is contemplated by those who, "going about to establish their own righteousness, refuse to submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." Hence the attempts are, in many instances, too successful, which are daily

* 1 Cor. i. 25. † Acts xx. 24. ‡ Ephes. ii. 6, 7. § Rom. v. 21.

witnessed, to disguise this its obnoxious feature, and by certain extenuations and refinements, to accommodate it to the pride of the sinful and unsanctified heart. Hence the deplorable infatuation of multitudes, who choose rather to perish in their sin, than to be so entirely and deeply indebted to unmerited favour as the system of the gospel implies. But, to a mind truly humbled, nothing is more welcome, nothing is more delightful, than the contemplation of revealed truth under this aspect. To feel himself under an unutterable obligation is [not an] oppressive load, from which the contrite in heart is anxious to be released. He cheerfully takes his proper place; loves to sink into the lowest depths of self-abasement; and values the blessings of salvation infinitely more for that

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XXXI.

ON PATIENCE.

Heb. x. 36.—*Ye have need of patience.*

This epistle was evidently directed to persons in a state of calamity and suffering, and contemplates its readers under that aspect. It was addressed to Jewish converts, who suffered from the rancorous bigotry and malice of their countrymen, who, in the commencement of christianity, were its most violent and formidable persecutors. It attaches to some remarkable period of persecution which they had sustained immediately on their professing the gospel. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used."* In this trial they

* Heb. x. 32, 33.

had conducted themselves with great constancy and firmness, "taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Hence the apostle takes occasion to admonish them still to persevere in the hope and profession of the gospel, intimating that they were not to expect an exemption from future trials. "Ye have need of patience."

The state of christianity, in every age, has called for the exercise and cultivation of this grace. It is a quality in the composition of a christian which is never unnecessary, as he must not expect long to be in a situation where its exertion is not demanded.

I. The circumstances of christians are often such as to render its exercise indispensably requisite, if they would glorify God, by evincing a suitable spirit and conduct.

1. The trials which good men are called to endure are often very severe. They have their full share in the ordinary ills of life; besides trials which are peculiar to themselves, arising out of the nature of the christian profession.

On many of them poverty presses with an accumulated weight. They find it difficult, or impossible, with all the exertions they can make, to procure an adequate provision of the necessaries of life for themselves and families. They are obliged to content themselves with a scanty and insufficient diet, with clothing insufficient to protect them from the inclemencies of the season, which is sometimes aggravated by the state of their health being such as calls for certain comforts and indulgences, which it is out of their power to procure. Their subsistence is precarious; so that when they rise in the morning they have no certainty of being able to provide for the day that is passing over them; which is enough to overcast the mind with anxious and dismal forebodings. They could endure hardships themselves, perhaps, with tolerable composure; but it is distressing to see their helpless and innocent babes asking, with imploring looks, for that relief from hunger which they are unable to supply. How many a pious head of a family, in this,

and in almost every other country, is placed, at this moment, in these afflicting circumstances! and, surely, it will be readily acknowledged that such "have need of patience."

2. The trials under which many of the people of God are labouring are various and complicated: a confluence of afflictions meet together, and heighten and exasperate each other. The evils of poverty are aggravated by sickness and bodily pain; a constitution broken down with the weight of years and infirmities is added to domestic trials and disappointments, the most difficult to sustain. Those from whom assistance was expected, became cool and indifferent, perhaps hostile; and the anguish arising from confidence betrayed, and friendship violated, is added to every other evil. Thus David, in his old age, when his natural strength was much abated, had to struggle with the unnatural rebellion of his son, and with the treacherous desertion of some of his most intimate and endeared friends, those with whom he had often taken sweet counsel, and gone to the house of God in company. "Had it been an enemy I could have borne it, but it was thou, mine equal and my guide." When he had reason to hope he had surmounted his difficulties, and by great exertion and resolution weathered the storms of life, and was about to enter into a peaceful harbour, a sudden hurricane arose, which drove him back into the ocean, and threatened him with total destruction. Job, in like manner, was visited with stroke upon stroke: first his property was torn from him, then his children, then his health; lastly, the friends, from whom he expected support and consolation, turned his enemies and accusers. As he had great need of patience, so his exemplification of it though far from being perfeet, was such as to render his name illustrious through every succeeding age.

3. When heavy and complicated trials are of long continuance,—when, after enduring them long, no prospect of deliverance appears, no mitigation is experienced, —when there is none who can venture to set a period to calamities,—this is a circumstance that puts patience to

the severest test. It is much easier to bear a very acute pain or affliction for a short time, than one much more moderate during a very protracted period. The duration of trials is a severer exercise of patience than their severity. For a certain time the soul collects itself, and summons up its resolution to bear; but when the suffering continues long,* the mind becomes weary of exerting a continued effort, and is apt to yield to the force of impatience and inquietude. In these several situations, the christian has need of patience.

II. Let us consider the nature and the excellence of true patience. It is a grace of the Spirit of God. God condescends to be called the "God of patience;" and [we read of] "the kingdom [and patience] of [Jesus] Christ,"—[of] "the word of his patience." By means of it, they who suffer possess their souls. Another intention of this passage it is not necessary to mention: the present [being] instructive, and sufficiently adapted to the apparent design of the writer.

[There is] a great difference in the manner in which the same trials are borne by different persons:—some restless, complaining, dissatisfied with the conduct of Providence, and at all around them; others, though they feel, are yet composed, tranquil, self-possessed, capable of exercising their thoughts, and of exerting their reason, without disturbance—they "possess their souls." The happy effects of this frame of spirit are the following:—

1. He who in "patience possesses his soul," is able to trace his afflictions to the hand of God; looking through inferior instruments to the hand of the Supreme Director.

2. He is prevented from forming an erroneous and exaggerated estimate of his sufferings; from suspecting that they are singular and unparalleled; and thus from sinking into despondency, and indulging a spirit of com-

* Mr. Hall, who, there is great reason to believe, was, from his infancy to the time of his death, seldom free from severe pain, could draw these observations from a sad experience; while his uniform cheerfulness supplied a rare example of the grace he here describes.—Ed.

plaint; "knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

3. He is at leisure to [attend] to the instructions which afflictions contain, to learn those important lessons which they are best adapted to teach. Affliction is a school where we cannot learn, unless we, in some degree, possess our souls in patience. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years."*

4. He who possesses his soul in patience, is able to perform many important duties while in a state of suffering. It is not a barren season to him. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."† Much cultivation of the heart, much internal spiritual discipline, may then be exercised.

5. He who thus possesses patience is at liberty to reach the promises of God, to open his mind to the consolations of the gospel. He can reason with his soul—"Why art thou so cast down, O my soul?"

6. While in patience we possess our souls, we can expatiate in the views of future blessedness.

* Deut. viii. 3. 4, 5. † Isaiah xxxii. 20.

XXXII.

ON CANDOUR AND LIBERALITY, AS EVINCED IN PROMOTING THE ERECTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP.

LUKE vii. 5.—*He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.**

IT is pleasing and instructive to behold in the narratives of scripture, frequent instances of the triumphs of divine grace over obstacles utterly insurmountable to any inferior power, and even striking examples of transcendent piety, where, considering the actual state of human nature, it was least to be expected. In these instances is verified the truth of our Lord's observation, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

* The sermon, of which the brief notes are here presented, was the last, except one, that Mr. Hall preached; though the notes seem to have been prepared for a former occasion. It was delivered on the morning of February 6, 1831, the Sunday previous to the attack which terminated in death. The students in the Bristol Education Society, (an institution devoted to the preparation of young men for the ministry in the Baptist persuasion,) had long been in the habit of preaching in various small places, in the more populous and wretched quarters of the city of Bristol; and, their labours being found productive of much good, it was judged expedient to erect a place of worship, which might not only contain the several small companies thus assembled, but accommodate others that might be induced to attend. A considerable sum of money was, accordingly, raised for this purpose; the building was commenced; and in order to contribute towards the remainder of the expense, it was proposed to make a collection in Broadmead chapel. Mr. Hall very warmly seconded the project, and recommended it, with great earnestness, after his morning sermon. In the evening he preached a very impressive and splendid discourse on the text—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness," of which he does not appear to have prepared any notes. This subject he meant to apply to the case of the new place of worship; but an exceedingly heavy rain occasioning a comparatively small congregation, he stated, towards the conclusion of the sermon, that it would not be doing justice to a cause in which he felt so lively an interest, to make the collection when much fewer persons than usual were present; and proposed to defer it, therefore to a future occasion. But, alas! this was the close of his public services; and they, who had so often seen his countenance beaming with intellect, benevolence, and piety, and listened to his voice with inexpressible delight, and many of them with permanent benefit, saw and heard him no more!—ED.

We learn that no combination of external circumstances, —no profession or situation in life, however beset with temptation,—no education, however unfavourable to the production of piety,—ought to make us despair of attaining salvation.

Are the habits of military life peculiarly hostile to piety, and is it difficult, in connexion with these, to maintain that humility, sobriety, and heavenly mindedness, which are so essential to religion? Our text exhibits, notwithstanding, a most eminent saint in the person of a centurion. Is a neglected, or what is still worse, a perverted education, a great obstacle in the way of salvation; an education from which religion has been entirely excluded, or religious principles inculcated, the most fatal and erroneous? Behold an instance of unparalleled devotion and faith in a Roman centurion, a heathen by birth, and as there is every reason to conclude trained up in the practice of idolatry from his earliest infancy. Is the possession of authority apt to intoxicate man with pride, and especially in proportion as that authority is arbitrary and despotic? We have here, in a Roman officer, a pattern of the deepest humility. Having occasion to apply to our Lord for the cure of his servant, he would not admit of his giving himself the trouble of coming in person, from a conviction that it was unnecessary, and that he was undeserving of such honour. Finally, are mankind apt to be ill affected to each other on account of difference of national character, and the opposition which [exists in their religion]? The opposition, in this respect, betwixt the Romans and the Jews, was as great as can well be imagined. The Romans were devoted to idolatry, and looked upon the Jews, who refused to join in the worship of idols, as a sort of atheists; they hated them for their singularity and their supposed unnatural antipathy to all other nations; and, at this time, despised them as a conquered people. The centurion, though he had been nursed in these prejudices, and was now, by very profession, employed in maintaining the Roman authority over Judea, yet "loved the Jewish nation, built them a synagogue," and sought

an interest in the affections of that people; so that the Jewish elders, sympathizing with him under his distress, are the bearers of his message to our Lord.

Let us attend to the hints of instruction suggested by the character which they here give of the centurion.

I. "He loveth our nation."

We have already remarked the superiority to prejudice which this trait in his character implies. We now observe, his attachment to the Jewish nation rested on solid grounds; it was such an attachment that it was next to impossible for a good man not to feel. The Jews were the only people in the world, before the coming of Christ, who were taken into an express covenant with God. To them, he stood in a relation different from that which he sustained towards any other people. He was their proper national head and king. The covenant on which he became so, was entered into at Mount Sinai, when Jehovah descended in a visible manner, uttered his laws in an audible voice, and, by the express consent of the people, communicated to Moses those statutes and ordinances which were ever after to form the basis of their polity, civil and religious, and a perpetual barrier of separation betwixt them and other nations. Conducted by a train of the most astonishing miracles to the land of Canaan, God was pleased to dwell amongst them by a miraculous symbol, and to make them the depositories of true religion. Thus the will of God was known, and his worship celebrated, whilst surrounding nations were sunk in the deepest ignorance. A succession of prophets was raised up at different periods; a body of inspired truths was communicated; a peculiar system of providence established, as far as their affairs were concerned; and a series of predictions preserved, by which an expectation was excited of the appearance of a divine person, of their race, who was to be the "light of the Gentiles," "the glory of Israel," the person in whom "all the nations of the earth were to be blessed." These high privileges and prerogatives are thus enumerated by St. Paul: "Who am an Israelite, of whom is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of

the law, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all blessed for evermore."

As the centurion derived his knowledge of the Supreme Being from the Jews, either by conversing with them, or attending [their worship], he necessarily felt himself attached to that nation.

Religious benefits, as they are incomparably superior to all others, lay a foundation for the strongest attachment among men. If we are taught rightly to appreciate spiritual favours, we shall feel veneration and respect for those who, under God, have been the instruments of conveying them to us, far superior to what we feel towards any other persons.

To love the Jewish nation is still a natural dictate of piety. To that nation we are indebted for the records of inspiration, and the light of the gospel; for the men, who, under the direction of the Spirit, composed the former and published the latter among the pagans, were all Jews. Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, let it be remembered, were Jews; and though the Israelitish race are for the present suffering the vengeance of the Almighty for rejecting the Messiah, the blessings yet in reserve for them, to be bestowed at a future season, are great and signal. Separated for a time from the church of God for their unbelief, the period of their exaltation is deferred; but their glory is not extinguished: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for their fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." They are the seed of a glorious church, the stock which remains in the earth; but which, at a future time, will revive and flourish in the beauty of holiness, and send forth its branches to the end of the earth. Though they have long lain "in the valley of vision till their bones are become very dry," yet the Lord in his own time, and that not a remote one, will "call to the four winds, the Spirit of God will revive them, their sinews will come upon their flesh, will cover them, and they shall live." As the

Jews were the first instruments in converting the nations to the faith of Jesus, so, we doubt not, it is to them the honour is reserved, of the final and universal propagation of the gospel: For "if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" On this account, when we behold the miserable outcasts of the Jewish nation, it is natural and proper for us to feel, in a manner similar to what we are accustomed to do on beholding a prince in exile and captivity, with the difference which arises from the certainty of their being restored to more than their former splendour: "when the Deliverer shall come from Sion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Was the Jewish nation an object of respect to the devout worshipper of God? How much more are the servants of Christ entitled to the same respect! The servants of Christ are "the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." They succeeded to the spiritual privileges of the Jewish church, and enjoy them in a still higher degree. They are the salt of the earth; they are, through the illuminations of the Sun of Righteousness, the "light of the world," the "city set on a hill, which cannot be hid."

The love of God will never fail to manifest itself by saving those, in every sect and denomination, who appear to be partakers of his holiness. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." With all their imperfections, true christians will invariably be esteemed by a good man as the excellent of the earth.

Having contemplated the attachment which the centurion displayed to the people of God, let us next consider in what manner his attachment was evinced. It was not an empty profession, productive of no fruit.

II. He "hath built us a synagogue." The original words are more emphatic: "*It is he who built us a synagogue.*" Synagogues were places of worship, where the Jews were wont to assemble on their sabbath, to

hear the law and the prophets read and interpreted, accompanied with suitable exhortations to the people, and to present prayer and praise to God. Wherever ten Jews resided, who were at leisure to attend the worship of God at ordinary times, as well as on the sabbath, it was the opinion of the Jewish rabbies, a synagogue ought to be erected. Thither the people resorted, not only to hear the law, but also to offer up their supplications; the times of prayer, which were at nine in the morning, at noon, and at three o'clock in the evening, corresponding to the times of presenting the morning and evening incense. These buildings for public worship were very much multiplied: at Jerusalem there were many hundreds of them; at Alexandria they were also prodigiously numerous; and there was scarcely a town, where any number of Jews resided, where there was not one or more. They were governed by a council of elders, over whom presided an officer, called the angel of the synagogue, whence the title of angel is supposed to be given in the Revelation to the presiding elder, or bishop, in the christian church.

In each synagogue a discipline was established for the support of purity of manners; and punishments were sometimes inflicted on notorious transgressors of the law. Thus we read of Saul, afterwards named Paul, scourging men and women in the synagogues.

These places of worship are supposed to have taken rise among the Jews, after the return from the Babylonish captivity: at least, we find no distinct traces of them before; though it was customary, even in the days of Elisha, to resort for instruction to the prophets, on the new moons and the sabbaths.

[Synagogues] were a most important appendage to the temple-worship, and a principal cause of preventing the Israelites from relapsing into idolatry, to which they were before so strongly addicted. Instead of assembling at Jerusalem three times a year, where no public instruction was delivered, but sacrifices and offerings only presented by the priest, the people, by means of synagogues, had an opportunity of listening to the writings of Moses

and the prophets every sabbath-day, the officiating ministers publicly harangued the people, and the persons who frequented the synagogue were united in religious society. While the temple-service was admirably adapted to preserve the union of the nation, and to prevent innovations in the public solemnities of religion, the synagogues were equally calculated for an increase of personal piety, and to perpetuate in the minds of the people the knowledge of revealed truth. After these were established, degenerate as the sons of Israel became, we never read of their relapsing into idolatry. The denunciations of the law were so often thundered in their ears, the calamities which their fathers had suffered for this offence were too familiar to their recollection, ever to allow them thus "to tempt the Lord to jealousy."

There is undoubtedly a great resemblance betwixt the edifices erected for christian worship amongst us, and those of the Jews. They appear to me to bear a much greater analogy to the synagogues than to the temple. The temple was a single building, which the Israelites were forbidden to multiply, it being designed to be a centre of union to the whole nation, as well as the immediate seat of the divine presence, which was confined to that spot: synagogues might be built at pleasure, and were spread over the whole land. The very idea of a temple is that of an immediate habitation of the Deity, who manifests himself there in a supernatural manner, or, at least, is believed so to do by his votaries. In the heathen temples, after they were duly consecrated, the gods, in whose honour they were erected, were supposed to take an immediate and preternatural possession of them. What was mere pretence or delusion among the heathen, was, at the temple of Jerusalem, an awful reality: the Lord visibly "dwelt betwixt the cherubim." In places set apart for christian worship, there were no such visible tokens of the presence of God. The manner of his presence is spiritual, not local; he dwells in the hearts of his worshippers. St. Stephen taught the Jewish nation, that it was one of the distinctions of the

christian dispensation, that the Highest no longer "dwelleth in temples made with hands." An altar, a sacrifice, and a priest, were the necessary appendages of the temple. But, among christians, we have no altar, [properly] so called, but the cross; no priest, but the Son of God, who remaineth "a priest for ever;" and no sacrifice, but the sacrifice "once offered for the sins of the world." The priestly office of Christ put an end to the typical priesthood of the sons of Aaron. It is an everlasting priesthood, and admits of no rival or substitute. In popular language, indeed, we give the appellation to that order of men who are set apart to minister in sacred things; and it is of no consequence, providing we recollect that it is but figurative language, not designed to be rigorously exact: for the apostolic definition of a priest, in the strict sense of the word, is one "taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" In the temple-service, no provision was made for the regular instruction of the people in the principles of religion, beyond what the more serious attention might cull out from the typical import of its services, which were, indeed, "a shadow of good things to come," and obscurely pointed to the Saviour. It was erected as a place of national rendezvous, where God gave audience to the people as their temporal sovereign, and received their sin-offerings and peace-offerings, as acknowledgements of their offences and tokens of their allegiance. The ceremonial institution was then in the highest degree pompous and splendid. Synagogues were established, it has already been observed, for the worship of individuals, for the instruction of the people in religious principles, and for the exercise of prayer and devotion every sabbath, as well as on other suitable occasions. The mode of worship was plain and simple, and more corresponding to the genius of christianity.

To this we must add, that the platform of the church was framed, in a great measure, on the plan of the Jewish synagogues, as is generally acknowledged by the most learned men. The Scriptures were read and

interpreted in both, which was the origin of preaching; prayer was addressed to God in the name of the congregation; each was governed by a council of elders, over which one presided, which gave birth to the title of bishops; and irregularities of conduct, and errors in doctrine, were the subjects of censure and animadversion. Excommunication in the christian church was similar, in its effects, to an expulsion from the synagogue. So great was the resemblance betwixt christian assemblies and synagogues, that they are sometimes, in scripture, used as synonymous terms. "If there come into your assembly," says St. James, "a man with a gold ring, or goodly apparel:" in the original it is *synagogue*. We need not be surprised at that close analogy we have traced, when we reflect that the first converts to christianity were principally Jews, who, incorporating themselves into societies, adopted, as far as they were permitted by the Holy Ghost, the usages and forms to which they had so long been accustomed.

III. The passage which is the ground of this discourse represents the conduct of the centurion as highly praiseworthy and exemplary. "He is worthy," say the Jewish elders, "for whom thou shouldst do this; for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."

To assist in the erection of places of worship, providing it proceed from right motives, is unquestionably an acceptable service to the Most High. Whatever extends his worship, in facilitating the means of it, is directly calculated to promote his glory and the salvation of men, with which the worship is inseparably connected. The service and worship of God is the very end of our creation; the perfection of it constitutes the glory of heaven; and its purity and spirituality, in whatever degree they subsist, are the chief ornaments of earth.

The increase of places dedicated to public worship ought surely to be no matter of lamentation or offence. They are rendered necessary by the increase of population. It is this which renders that accommodation quite inadequate at present, which was sufficient in former

times. The edifices devoted to the established religion in our country are plainly too few, and the accommodation afforded to the poor especially too scanty, were the people ever so well disposed, to accommodate all who might wish to resort to them. Were I to advance this on my own [authority], I am well aware it would be entitled to little weight. I must be allowed to corroborate it by the testimony of one of the most distinguished ornaments of the church of England, a clergyman, a man of elevated rank, of enlarged and profound observation, and of exalted piety,* who notices this evil in the following terms:—"Where are the poor in our large towns, where are the poor in the metropolis, to find room? One of the consequences obviously resulting from this deficiency, wherever it subsists, of accommodation in a parochial church for the poor, is this, that they are reduced to the alternative of frequenting no place of worship, or of uniting themselves with some of the methodists or dissenters. Every branch of the alternative has been adopted within my knowledge. That those who cannot obtain admittance into our places of worship should frequent the religious assemblies of some of our brethren in Christ who differ from us, ought to be a subject of thankfulness to ourselves. But are we justified in driving them from truth which we regard as simple, and as taught under very favourable circumstances, to truth, blended with error, or presented under circumstances of disadvantage?" The preference this writer finds for his own denomination is such as becomes every honest man; while the favourable opinion he avows of the designs of others does honour to his head and to his heart.

Till the legislature will exert itself, by adopting some effectual measures for the more extensive accommodation of the people in parochial churches, no enlightened friend of religion will complain of the supply of this deficiency by the exertions of persons out of the pale of the establishment. It is above all things necessary to the

* Mr. Hall here alludes to Dr. Ryder, the late excellent Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry.—Ed.

welfare of the state, to the salvation of souls, and the glory of God, that public worship should be supported and upheld: in what edifices, or with what forms, providing heresy and idolatry are excluded, is a consideration of inferior moment. We do not differ from our brethren in the establishment in essentials; we are not of two distinct religions: while we have conscientious objections to some things enjoined in their public service, we profess the same doctrines which they profess; we worship the same God; we look for salvation through the blood of the same Mediator; we implore the agency of the same blessed Spirit, by whom we all have access to the Father; we have the same rule of life; and maintain, equally with them, the necessity of that "holiness, without which none shall see the Lord."

The increasing demand for new places of worship, or for enlarging the old, arises, in great part, from the increased attention paid to the concerns of religion.

XXXIII.

ON THE REWARD OF THE PIOUS IN HEAVEN.

Matt. v. 12.—*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.*

The gospel of Christ is not intended to extinguish or impair the natural sensibility of the human mind; but to purify and refine it, rather, by directing it to its proper objects. It proposes to transfer the affections from earth to heaven,—from a world of shadows and illusions to a world where all is real, substantial, and eternal. By connecting the present with the future, by teaching us to consider every event in its relation to an hereafter, it presents almost every thing under a new aspect, and gives birth to such views of human life as, on a superficial observation, appear false and paradoxical. What can appear more so than to call upon men to "rejoice and be exceeding glad," when they are persecuted

and reproached, and loaded with every kind of calumny? Yet such, we find, is the language of that teacher, who, "coming from above, is above all."

Nor is there any difficulty in admitting the justness and propriety of the sentiment contained in this injunction, when it is added, "for great is your reward in heaven." A consummation so glorious throws a lustre over all the preparatory scenes, and turns into an occasion of joy and exultation that from which we should otherwise recoil with horror. We may reasonably be expected to welcome the short-lived pains which are to be followed by eternal pleasures, and those temporary reproaches which will be compensated with everlasting glory.

I. The felicity which awaits those who persevere through good and evil report, in a stedfast adherence to Christ, is frequently expressed in the Scriptures by the name of *reward*. It is almost unnecessary to remind you that this term is not on such occasions to be taken in its most strict and proper sense, as though the patience and perseverance of the saints *deserved* eternal felicity. Nothing is more opposed to the doctrine of scripture, and the feelings of a real christian, than such an idea. It is true, the inspired writers evince no reluctance to employ this term. Our Lord declares, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward; and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward."* "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be called the children of the Highest."† St. Paul assures us, "Every man shall receive his own reward: if any man's work abide, he shall receive a reward."‡

* Matt. x. 41, 42. † Luke vi. 35.
‡ 1 Cor. iii. 8, 14.

"Let no man beguile you of your reward."* "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."† "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."‡ But still we must never lose sight of its true nature—that "it is of grace, not of debt." It is what the infinite condescension of God is pleased to bestow on those who love [him], not what any *man* claims as equitably due: for our best performances are mixed with sinful imperfections, which need themselves to be pardoned; not to say that the ability to perform them is the effect of renewing and sanctifying grace; so that while, in one sense they are our deeds, they are, in another, his donations.

The felicity which God will bestow upon his faithful servants, may be properly denominated *a reward*, on the following accounts.

1. It is inseparably joined to obedience, and is promised as a motive to encourage and sustain it Christ will be the "Author of eternal salvation to them," and them only, "who obey him."§

2. It will be bestowed expressly as a mark of approbation, and acceptance of the obedience to which it is annexed. It will be bestowed as a token and demonstration of God's complacency in righteousness. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels."‖ "And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."¶

3. *The reward*, the felicity bestowed, will be proportioned to the degree of religious improvement, "to the work of faith and labour of love." We are reminded of those who are "saved as by fire;" and of those who have "an abundant entrance;" of "a righteous man's," and

* Col. ii. 18 † Matt. vi. 6. ‡ Rev. xxii. 12.
§ Heb. v. 9. ‖ 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. ¶ Luke xix. 17.

of "a prophet's reward;" of some who "sow sparingly," and of others who "sow bountifully," both of whom shall reap accordingly.

II. Having said enough to establish the scripture idea of rewards, I proceed to the more immediate object in view, which is, by a comparison of both, to evince the superiority of heavenly to earthly rewards, of its recompenses to those of time.

1. The rewards of heaven are certain. Whether we shall possess them or not may be matter of great uncertainty, because it is possible we may not be of the description of persons to whom they are promised. The heirs of salvation may, at certain seasons, entertain doubts of their finally obtaining them; but they are in themselves certain, since they are secured by the "promise of Him who cannot lie."

On this account they are strikingly contrasted with earthly recompenses. The most passionate votary of the world is never certain he shall possess an adequate recompense for all his toil, and care, and earthly sacrifices. How often does she mock her followers with delusive hopes, entangle them in endless cares, and exhaust them with hopeless and consuming passions; and, after all, assign them no compensation. After years of unremitting fatigue and unceasing anxiety, the object they have pursued eludes their grasp, or appears as remote as ever, till, at the close of life, they are compelled to sit down in hopeless disappointment, and confess that they have "sown to the wind, and reaped the whirlwind." Of the many prizes which the world exhibits to human hope, there is not one whose possession is certain; nor is there a single desire with which she inspires her votaries but what is liable to become a source of anguish, by being disappointed of its gratification. Whatever be the immediate object of pursuit, success depends on circumstances quite out of our power; we are often as much injured by the folly of others as by our own. If the object which we are pursuing be highly desirable, others feel its attraction as well as ourselves; and we find ourselves engaged in a race where there are many competitors, but only one can gain the prize.

How different it is with heavenly rewards! In relation to them, no well-meant effort is unsuccessful. We lay up as much treasure there as we sincerely and perseveringly endeavour to accumulate; nor is the success of our efforts liable to be defeated by the jealousy of rivals.

Our attempts to promote the benefit of our fellow-creatures are estimated according to their events rather than their intentions; and, however sincere and zealous they may have been, unless they are productive of some probable benefit, they are treated with neglect and ingratitude.

How different, in regard to the recompenses of Heaven! He will reward, not only the services we have performed, but those which it was our wish to have performed. The sincere intention is recompensed as well as the deed. "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee."* The friendship of mankind is sometimes as much endangered by the greatness of the benefit conferred as by neglect; and while little acts of attention and kindness cement the ties of friendship, such is the perverseness of human nature, that great favours weaken and dissolve them.

While they are sufficiently aware of the advantages that they derive, they hate the obligation which they entail; and, feeling themselves incapable of making an adequate return, they consult at once their pride and their indolence by forgetting it. But how different is it in relation to the Supreme Being: we can never lay Him under obligation; yet his kindness disposes, while his opulence enables him, to reward in the most liberal manner.

Many are so immersed in meanness and folly, that

* 2 Chron. i. 11.

they have little care but to be amused: the voice of truth and the admonitions of wisdom are discord to their ear; and he who desires to conciliate their regard must not attempt to do them good, but must soothe their pride, inflame their corruptions, and hasten on their destruction. They are of the temper of Ahab, the king of Israel, who caressed the false prophets that lured him on to his ruin, while he avowed his hatred of Micaiah, because he "prophesied evil of him and not good."*

The disinterested patriot, who devotes his nights and days to promote the interests of his country, may very probably fall a victim to its vengeance, by being made answerable for events beyond human foresight or control; and one unsuccessful undertaking shall cancel the remembrance of a series of the most brilliant achievements.

The most important services frequently fail of being rewarded when they are not recommended by their union with the ornamental appendages of rank or fortune. "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man."† From these, and various other causes that might be specified, we see how uncertain are the recompenses of this world, and how delusive the expectations they excite, and to what cruel reverses and disappointments they are exposed.

How different the reward which awaits us in heaven; how infallibly certain the promise of him who cannot lie; how secure the treasure that is laid up in heaven, which "rust cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal!" They are not liable to the fluctuations of time and chance, but are secured by the promise and the oath of God.

II. The recompenses of heaven are satisfying. How far this quality is from attaching to the emoluments and

* 1 Kings xxii. 8. † Eccles. ix. 14, 15

pleasures of this world, universal experience can attest. They are so far from satisfying, that their effect uniformly is to inflame the desires which they fail to gratify.

The pursuit of riches is one of the most common and the most seductive which occupy the attention of mankind; and, no doubt, they assume, at a distance, a most fascinating aspect. They flatter their votary with the expectation of real and substantial bliss: but no sooner has he attained the portion of opulence to which he aspired, than he feels himself as remote as ever from satisfaction. The same desire revives with fresh vigour; his thirst for further acquisitions is more intense than ever; what he before esteemed riches sinks, in his present estimation, to poverty; and he transfers the name to ampler possessions and larger revenues. Say, did you ever find the votary of wealth who could sit down contented with his present acquisitions? Nor is it otherwise with the desire of fame, or the love of power and preeminence.

The man of pleasure is still, if possible, under a greater incapacity of finding satisfaction. The violence of his desires renders him a continual prey to uneasiness; imagination is continually suggesting new modes and possibilities of indulgence, which subject him to fresh agitation and disquiet. A long course of prosperity, a continued series of indulgences, produces at length a sickly sensibility, a childish impatience of the slightest disappointment or restraint. One desire un gratified is sufficient to mar every enjoyment, and to impair the relish for every other species of good. Witness Haman, who, after enumerating the various ingredients of a most brilliant fortune, adds, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the gate."*

The recompenses of the world are sometimes just, though they never satisfy; hence the frequency of suicide. * * * * * *

III. The recompenses of heaven are eternal.

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* Esther v. 13.

XXXIV.

ON TAKING THE NAME OF GOD IN VAIN.

EXODUS xx. 7.—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

THE laws given to the Israelites were of three kinds—ceremonial, judicial, and moral. The ceremonial consisted of those religious observances and rites which were partly intended to separate the peculiar people of God from surrounding nations, and partly to prefigure the most essential truths and blessings which were to be communicated to mankind at the advent of the Messiah. These, being in their [nature] typical, necessarily ceased when the great personage to whom they pointed made his appearance. The judicial laws respected the distribution of property, the rights of rulers and subjects, and the mode of deciding controversies, together with a variety of other particulars relating to civil polity, which is always of a variable and mutable nature. The third sort are moral: these are founded in the nature of things, and the reciprocal relations in which God and man stand towards each other, and are, consequently, unchangeable, since the principles on which they are founded are capable of no alteration. The two former sorts of laws are not obligatory upon christians; nor did they, while they were in force, oblige any besides the people to which they were originally addressed. They have waxed old, decayed, and passed away. But the third sort are still in force, and will remain the unalterable standard of right and wrong, and the rule throughout all [periods of time]. The Ten Commandments, or the "Ten Words," as the expression is in the original, uttered by God in an audible voice, from Mount Sinai, belong to the third class. They are a transcript of the law of nature, which prescribes the inherent and essential duties which spring from the relation which mankind bear to God and to each other. The first four respect the duty we owe to God, and the last six that which we

owe to our fellow-creatures. The first ascertains the object of worship; the second the mode of worship, forbidding all visible representations of the Deity by pictures or images; the third inculcates the reverence due to the divine name; the fourth, the observation of the sabbath, or of a seventh part of our time to be devoted to the immediate service of God. These ten rules, in order to mark their preeminent importance and obligation, were inscribed by the finger of God on two tables of stone, which Moses was commanded to prepare for that purpose.*

Our attention is, at present, directed to the third of these precepts—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" in treating of which we shall endeavour—

I. To determine what is forbidden in this commandment; and,

II. The grounds on which this prohibition proceeds.

I. In considering what is forbidden by the precept before us, it were easy to multiply particulars; but the true import of it may, if I am not mistaken, be summed up in the two following:—

1. It forbids perjury, or the taking up the name [of God] for the purpose of establishing falsehood. Vanity is frequently used in scripture for wickedness, and particularly for that species of wickedness which consists in falsehood; and after all that has been [advanced] on that famous saying of our Lord, "every *idle* word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement,"† it is most probable that he means by idle word, a word which is morally evil, partaking of the nature of falsehood, malice, pride, or impurity. It is in this [view] only, as it appears to me, that the truth of our Lord's saying can be soberly and consistently maintained. When the pretended prophets are threat-

* Nay, after Moses in his anger and grief at the idolatry of the Israelites, threw down and broke the first tables, Jehovah condescended to write these ten commandments a *second* time. See Exod. xxxi. 18; xxxiv. 4, 28. Deut. x. 1—4.—ED.

† Matt. xii. 36.

ened on account of their uttering vain visions, the vanity ascribed to them meant their falsehood. In all civilized countries, recourse has been had to oaths, which are solemn appeals to God respecting a matter of fact for the determination of controversies which could not be decided without the attestation of the parties concerned, and of other competent witnesses. Hence an oath is said, by the apostle, to be "an end of all strife."* To take a false oath on such occasions, which is the crime of perjury, is one of the most atrocious violations of the law of nature and of God which can be committed, since it involves two crimes in one; being at once a deliberate insult to the majesty of God, and an act of the highest injustice towards our fellow-creatures.

A perjured person is, accordingly, branded with infamy, as well as subjected to severe punishment, which is equally demanded by the honour of God and the welfare of society. It may be reasonably hoped there is no person in this assembly who has been guilty of this crime, or is under any strong temptation to commit it. But I cannot omit this opportunity of expressing regret that the multiplication of oaths by the legislature, in the affairs of revenue and of commerce, has tended to render them too cheap, and has greatly diminished the horror with which the very idea of a false oath ought to be accompanied. Though it is always lawful to swear to a fact of which we are well assured, at the requisition of a magistrate or a public functionary; yet it deserves the attention of a christian legislator, whether the introduction [of oaths] on every the slightest occasion, can have any other tendency than to defeat the purpose, by rendering them of no authority; to say nothing of the blow which it strikes at the root of public morals.

If it was a complaint made by an ancient prophet, "By reason of swearing the land mourneth," we have assuredly not less reason to adopt the same complaint. Perjury, it is to be feared, is an epidemic vice in this nation. Among many it is reduced to a system: and,

* Heb. vi. 16.

awful to relate, there is, as I am credibly informed, a tribe of men who make it their business to take false oaths at the custom-house, for which they are paid a stated price. The name by which these wretched men are known is, it must be confessed, highly apposite; they are styled *damned souls*.* But to proceed.

2. The second way in which this precept is violated, is the profane use of the name of God on trivial occasions; in familiar discourses, whether it be in mirth or in anger. There are some men who are in the constant habit of interlarding their common discourses with the name of God; generally in the form of swearing, at other times in the language of cursing and execration, without any assignable motive, except it be to give an air of superior spirit and energy to their language. The mention of the Deity is often so introduced as evidently to appear a mere expletive; nor is any thing more common than to hear such persons declare they absolutely mean nothing by it. When persons of this description are inflamed with anger, it is usual for them to express their resentment in the form of the most dreadful execrations, wishing the damnation of their fellow-creatures. There are multitudes who are scarce ever heard to make mention of the name of the Deity but upon such occasions.

To evince the criminality and impiety of this practice, let me request your serious attention to the following considerations:—

(1.) The practice of using the name of God on slight and trivial occasions is in direct opposition, not only to the passage [selected for our meditation], but also to a variety of others which identify the character of God with his name. He demands the same respect to be paid to his name as to himself. When the prophet Isaiah foretells the propagation of true religion, he ex-

* On Friday, the 15th of July, 1831, the Marquis of Lansdowne declared in the House of Peers, on introducing a bill for the regulation of oaths in certain government departments, that 10,000 oaths were taken in the department of the Customs, and 12,000 in that of the Excise, during the preceding year.—Ed.

presses it in the following terms:—"They shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel."* "I will sanctify my great name."† The piety of the tribe of Levi is thus expressed:—"My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before thy name?"‡ "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."§ The respect which God pays to his name is a frequent plea with the saints of God in their supplications for mercy: "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?"‖ "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God."¶

When our Lord directs us to pray that all due reverence [be given to that name], he expresses it thus—"Hallowed be thy name." It is proper to remark, that as there were "gods many, and lords many," among the heathen, to distinguish himself from these pretended deities, he was pleased to reveal himself to Abraham and to his descendants under the peculiar name of JEHOVAH, which signifies essential, independent, and unchanging existence.** The reverence paid to this name amongst the Jews was carried to the greatest possible height: it was never pronounced in common, nor even read in their synagogues; but whenever it occurred in the Scriptures, the word Adonai was substituted in its place. Among christians, God has not been pleased to assume any appropriate appellation; but, as the existence of the pretended deities is entirely exploded, the term God invariably denotes the One Supreme. The meaning of it is no longer ambiguous, it always represents the true God; and whatever respect was justly due to the name of Jehovah amongst the Jews, is equally due to that term which is appropriated among christians to denote

* Isaiah xxix. 23. † Ezek. xxxvi. 23. ‡ Mal. ii. 5.
§ Mal. i. 14. ‖ Josh. vii. 9. ¶ Deut. xxviii. 58.
** See pp. 109—113.

the existence and perfections of the same glorious Being. Hence it follows, that when we are taught to pray that the name of God may be hallowed, the meaning of that petition [is] that [the] appellation, whatever it be, by which the Supreme Being, in the various languages of the world, is denoted, may be duly reverenced. The term God among christians is no more ambiguous than the term Jehovah among the Jews; it denotes one and the same object: and it is, therefore, as criminal for us to use the one with levity, as a similar treatment of the other would have been amongst the Jews. And hence it is manifest that the whole spirit of the passages here quoted, respecting the name of God, is applicable in its full weight to the subject before us, and directly militates against the practice we are now condemning.

(2.) From the remarks which have been made, it follows, that the practice of using [his name] lightly, and [on] trivial occasions, is an infallible indication of irreverence towards God. As there is no [adequate] method of communicating [thought] but by words, which, though arbitrary in themselves, are agreed upon as the signs of ideas, no sooner are they employed but they call up the ideas they are intended to denote. When language is established, there exists a close and inseparable connexion between words and things, insomuch that we cannot pronounce or hear one without thinking of the other. Whenever the term God, for instance, is used, it excites among christians the idea of the incomprehensible Author of Nature: this idea it may excite with more or less force and impression, but it invariably excites this idea, and no other. Now, to connect the idea of God with what is most frivolous and ridiculous, is to treat it with contempt; and as we can only contemplate [objects] under their ideas, to feel no reverence for the idea of God is precisely the same thing as to feel a contempt for God. He who thinks of [the name of] God, without being awed by it, cannot pretend to be a fearer of God; but it is impossible to use the name of God lightly and unnecessarily without being in that predicament. It is evident, beyond all

contradiction, that such a man is in the habit of thinking of God without the least reverential emotion. He could not associate the idea of God with levity, buffoonery, and whatsoever is mean and ridiculous, if he had not acquired a most criminal insensibility to his character, and to all the awful peculiarities it involves. Suppose a person to be penetrated with a deep contrition for his sins, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, which is suspended over him; and are you not [immediately] aware of the impossibility of his using the name of the Being who is the object of all these emotions as a mere expletive? Were a person to pretend to the character of a humble penitent, and at the same time to take the name of God in vain, in the way to which we are now alluding; would you give the smallest credit to his pretensions? How decisive, then, must that indication of irreverence be, which is sufficient to render the very profession of repentance ridiculous!

But this practice is not only inconsistent with that branch of religion which [constitutes] repentance; it is equally inconsistent with sincere, much more with supreme, esteem and veneration. No child could bear to hear the name of a father, whose memory he highly respected and venerated, treated in the manner in which the name of the Supreme Being is introduced. It would be felt and resented as a high degree of rudeness and indignity. There is, in short, no being whatever, who is the object of strong emotion, whose distinguishing appellations could be mentioned in this manner without the utmost absurdity and indelicacy. Nothing can be more certain than that the taking the name of God in vain infallibly indicates a mind in which the reverence of God has no place. But is it possible to conceive a state of mind more opposite to reason and order than this? To acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being, our Maker and Preserver, possessed of incomprehensible perfections, on whom we are totally dependent throughout every moment of duration, and in every stage of our existence, without feeling the profoundest awe and reverence of him, is an impropriety, a moral

absurdity, which the utmost range of language and conception is inadequate to paint. If we consider the formal nature of sin as a deliberate transgression of the divine law, it resolves itself chiefly into this, that it implies a contempt of infinite majesty, and supreme power and authority. This disposition constitutes the very core and essence of sin. It is not merely the character of the wicked, that they contemn God; it enters deeply into the character of wickedness itself; nor is there a heavier charge, amongst their complicated crimes, adduced against the ancient Israelites, than that they "lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation."*

With respect to the profane oaths and execrations which most of those who are habituated to "take the name of God in vain" frequently utter, when they are transported with emotions of anger, their criminality is still greater, as they approach the confines of blasphemy. To hurl damnation at our fellow-creatures, whenever they have fallen under our displeasure, is precisely the conduct of the fool described by Solomon, who "casteth about firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am not I in sport?"†

We will do them the justice of supposing that they are far from really wishing the eternal destruction of their fellow-creatures; but, admitting this to be the case, admitting they have no such intention, is not this more than to insinuate that these terms have absolutely no meaning, and that the sanction of the divine law, the punishment of a future state, have no such existence, but are become mere figures of speech; that christianity is exploded, and that its most awful doctrines, like the fables of pagan superstition, serve only the purpose of illusion? Is it possible for him who lives under an habitual conviction of there being an eternal state of misery reserved for the impenitent, to [advert to] the terrors of that world on every slight occasion, to give additional force to the expression of his anger?

(3.) The practice of taking the Lord's name in vain is

* Deut. xxxii. 15. † Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

not only a great indication of want of reverence for God, but is calculated to wear out all serious religion from the mind. The effect of associating the most awful words, expressive of religious objects, with every thing which is mean and degrading, is adapted, in the highest degree, to sink them into contempt. He who has reflected the least on the laws of the human mind, must be aware of the importance of association, or of that principle, in consequence of which ideas and emotions, which have been frequently presented to the mind at the same time, naturally recall each other. It is by virtue of this law of nature, principally, that habits are formed, and that the links which connect things in the memory are constituted. By virtue of this it is that objects, which have been frequently presented along with ludicrous and ridiculous circumstances, acquire a character of ridicule. Hence the art of turning persons or things into ridicule is to place them in juxtaposition with what is low and trivial; in consequence of which the emotion of contempt excited by the latter is made to adhere to the former, and stamps them with a similar character. These remarks, obvious as they are, may be sufficient to evince the pernicious effect of taking the Lord's name in vain. Though it is not the formal design of those who indulge this practice to turn the most sacred objects into ridicule, it perfectly answers that purpose, as much as if it were their professed intention.

The practice [whose evils] we are endeavouring to [point out], will be more certainly productive of that effect, because it is usually connected with a total absence of the mention of God on all other occasions. Among this description of persons, the name and attributes of the Supreme Being, and the punishments of eternity, are rarely, if ever, introduced, but in the way of profanation.

If the most awful terms in religion are rarely or never employed but in connexion with angry or light emotions, he must be blind indeed who fails to perceive the tendency of such a practice to wear out all traces of seriousness from the mind. They who are guilty of it are

continually taking lessons of impiety; and their progress, it must be confessed, is proportioned to what might be expected.

(4.) The criminality of taking the Lord's name in vain is enhanced by the absence of every reasonable temptation. It is not, like many other vices, productive of either pleasure or emolument; it is neither adapted to gratify any natural appetite or passion, nor to facilitate the attainment of a single end which a reasonable creature can be supposed to have in view. It is properly the "superfluity of naughtiness," and can only be considered as a sort of peppercorn rent, in acknowledgement of the devil's right of superiority. It is a vice by which no man's reputation is extended, no man's fortune is increased, no man's sensual gratifications are augmented. If we attempt to analyze it, and reduce it to its real motive, we find ourselves at a total loss to discover any other than irreligious ostentation, a desire of convincing the world that its perpetrators are not under the restraint of religious fear. But as this motive is most impious and detestable, so the practice arising from it is not at all requisite for that purpose; since the persons who [persist in] it may safely leave it to other parts of their character to exonerate them from the suspicion of their being fearers of God. We beg leave to remind them that they are in no danger of being classed with the pious, either in this world or in that which is to come; and may therefore safely spare themselves the trouble of inscribing the name of their master on their foreheads. They are not so near to the kingdom of God as to be liable to be mistaken for its subjects.

XXXV.

ON THE ORIGIN AND IMPORT OF THE NAME, CHRISTIANS.

Acts xi. 26.—*And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

It is the glorious prerogative of God to bring good out of evil; and by the powerful superintendence of his providence, to overrule the most untoward events, and render them conducive to the ends of his glory and the good of his people.

The persecution which arose upon the death of Stephen affords a striking instance of this; whence the disciples being all scattered and dispersed, besides the apostles, went everywhere preaching the word; in consequence of which, the neighbouring districts and provinces were much sooner visited with the light of the gospel than they would have been but for that event.

Had the church of Jerusalem continued to enjoy [it] undisturbed, in that abundance of spiritual prosperity which attended it, and in the endearments of the most exalted friendship, they would in all likelihood have been indisposed to separate, and the precious *wheat* would have been accumulated in one spot. By the violence of persecution this happy society was broken up: the disciples found it necessary, according to the direction of their divine Master, to flee to other cities; where, inflamed with the desire of magnifying Christ, and of saving souls, they distributed the precious treasure of the gospel. Thus the clouds which the wind had scattered descended in rich and copious showers to refresh and render fruitful the earth: "And at that time there was a great persecution against the church that was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles: and they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."*

* Acts viii. 1, 4.

Among other places where the gospel was planted, on this occasion, was Antioch, a famous city built on the river Orontes, and the capital of Syria, where the kings of Syria, the successors of Alexander the Great, usually resided. This city must be carefully distinguished from Antioch in Pisidia, mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

The instruments chiefly employed in this work appear to have been men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to this city for the first time, spoke to the Greeks, (that is, the pagan inhabitants of the city,) preaching the Lord Jesus. Much success crowned their labours; or, to speak in the language of the Holy Ghost, "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."

This is the first instance we meet with in sacred writ of the gospel being preached to the heathen. Though the apostles and evangelists had received from their Lord a commission for that purpose, it was some time before they fully comprehended its import, or attempted to execute it. By a special direction, Peter had, indeed, previous to this, communicated the gospel to Cornelius and his family; but no general attempt had hitherto been made to propagate christianity amongst idolaters.

Until this time, they who were dispersed from Jerusalem, in various parts, preached the gospel to Jews only. The introduction of the gospel into Antioch was, therefore, distinguished by the remarkable circumstance of its being the first instance in which the apostles' commission was executed to its due extent; and the treasures of divine truth were freely proposed to the acceptance of the Gentiles. It was here the light of the word first began to dawn on benighted pagans, and that the heathen began to be "given to Christ for his possession." The happy union of Jews and Gentiles in one church, and the breaking down of the middle wall of partition which had for ages divided them from each other, commenced here. That ancient oracle, in which it was foretold that "God would enlarge Japheth, and

that he should dwell in the tents of Shem,"* then began to receive its accomplishment. Those whom Jesus had made "fishers of men," and who had hitherto confined their labours to the scanty rivulets and shallow pools of one people, began now to "launch out into the deep," and to cast their net in the wide ocean.

When tidings of these things came to the ears of the church of Jerusalem, they were far from feeling emotions of envy. The holy apostles were strangers to any uneasy sensation on finding that event accomplished by meaner instruments, which they had neglected to attempt. They immediately "sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who, when he came and saw the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them, that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord." His character explains his conduct; for "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were added unto the Lord."

Not satisfied with contributing his own exertions to the formation of the work, he called in superior aid: he [went] to "Tarsus, to seek Saul; and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch." Thus this church, in addition to other extraordinary circumstances, had the honour of being one of the first scenes in which the great apostle of the Gentiles laboured. It was here he began to scatter those celestial sparks which soon after kindled a general conflagration in the world. "And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people." Then follows the circumstance on which we have founded this discourse: "And they were called christians first at Antioch."

I. As the appellation of "Christian" was unknown till this time, it is natural to inquire by what appellation they were distinguished previously. From the Scriptures, it appears there were various names by which the followers of Christ were characterized. Among themselves the most usual denomination was, Brethren. "And we came the next day to Puteoli, where we found brethren."†

* Gen. ix. 27. † Acts xxviii. 13, 14.

"If any man," saith St. Paul, "that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, with such an one no not to eat."* They were styled "believers:" "And believers were the more added to the Lord, both of men and women."† They were denominated "disciples:" "There went with us also certain of the disciples of Cæsarea, and brought with them Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge."‡ Their enemies, by way of contempt, styled them Nazarenes: thus, Tertullus accuses Paul of being "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."§ Of similar import to this was the appellation of Galileans, and the terms αἱρεσις, or sect, meaning by that a body of men who had embraced a religion of their own, in opposition to that established by the law. And this appellation of Galileans was continued to be employed by the enemies of Christ as a term of reproach as late as the time of Julian, who reigned about the middle of the fourth century, and used it incessantly in his invectives against Christians. The followers of Christ were also styled "men of this way:"—"And I persecuted *this way* unto the death."‖

II. Another question naturally here occurs—Was this name given by human or divine authority? On this the Scriptures offer no certain information, nor can any thing be affirmed with confidence. It is not at all probable an appellation so inoffensive, and even so honourable, originated with their enemies; they would have invented one that was more opprobrious. But supposing it to have been assumed first by the disciples themselves, we can scarcely suppose they would have ventured to take a step so important as that of assuming an appellation by which the church was to be distinguished in all ages, without divine direction; especially at a time when the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were so common, and in a church where prophets abounded. For "there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had

* 1 Cor. v. 11. † Acts v. 14 ‡ Acts xxi. 16.
§ Acts xxiv. 5. ‖ Acts xxii. 4.

been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul"* Is it to be supposed that they would assume a new appellation without recourse to the prophets for that direction; or that, supposing it to have had no other than a human origin, it would have been so soon and so unanimously adopted by every part of the christian church? This opinion receives some countenance from the word here used, which is not in any other instance applied to the giving a name by human authority. In its genuine import, it bears some relation to an oracle.† Names, as they are calculated to give just or false representations of the nature of things, are of considerable importance; so that the affixing one to discriminate the followers of Christ, in every period of time, seems to have been not unworthy of divine interposition.

III. The next inquiry which arises on this subject respects the propriety and import of this name.

1. Of its propriety no doubt can be entertained. It has always been usual in the schools of philosophy, and in the sects arising out of a difference of opinion in religion, to give to the partizans the name of the founder. Thus the Platonists were so styled from Plato, the Pythagoreans from Pythagoras, the Aristotelians from Aristotle, the Sadduceans from Zadoc. The propriety of the followers of Christ taking their name from him was still more striking. The respective leaders we have mentioned merely communicated their opinions to their followers; and after they quitted the present [state], had no further influence over them; the conviction ceased for ever. It is far otherwise with the disciples of Christ: he is now as much as ever their living head; he lives in them, and they live by him. To them he stands in the same relation as the natural head to the members. It is not a civil, but a vital—not a temporary, but a perpetual and eternal, union, which subsists

* Acts xiii. 1.

† *Benson, Doddridge*, and others, think that the word χρηματισαι, implies that it was done *by a divine direction*. But *Parkhurst* is of opinion that the passages quoted by Doddridge do not bear him out in his interpretation.—Ed.

betwixt Christ and his followers. By a sacred and mysterious influence, he imparts his very image to his disciples; and it is surely fit they should receive their name from him from whom they have derived their nature.

In bestowing the appellation of Christians on the disciples of Christ, God may be considered as fulfilling that gracious declaration, "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name;"* "The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name."†

It soon began to prevail to the exclusion of every other. When Peter wrote his first epistle, it seems to have been in familiar use: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."‡ St. James styles it "that worthy name;" it is truly a most excellent and honourable appellation: "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name, by which ye are called?"§ In the times of persecution, the only question asked of such as were arraigned at the tribunal of the magistrate was, "Are you a Christian?" To answer this in the affirmative was looked upon as in every way to justify the proceeding to the utmost extremities. And in the midst of the sharpest torments, the martyrs found a relief and refreshment in repeating at each pause of agony, "I am a Christian."

2. The proper import of this name is, a follower of Christ: it denotes one, who from mature deliberation and an unbiassed mind, embraces the religion of Christ, receives his doctrine, believes his promises, and makes it his chief habitual care to shape his life by his precepts and example.

The christian and the man of the world are diametrically opposite characters; since it is a chief part of our Saviour's design, and the great scope of his religion, to redeem us from the present evil world.

The christian is one who professes to have attained such a practical knowledge of Christ as engages him to walk even as he walked. The rules by which he lives are the words of Christ; his example is the model after

* Isa. lxii. 2.
† Isa. lxv. 15.
‡ 1 Pet. iv. 16.
§ James ii. 7.

which he copies; the happiness he aspires to is that of being for ever with the Lord.

Here it is too apparent that multitudes assume the name of christian, to whom it is, in strict propriety, utterly inapplicable. Educated in a country were Christianity is the established religion, they acquiesce in its truth, or, perhaps, never thought the inquiry, whether it were true or not, of sufficient importance to engage their attention. But, to whatever distinguishes the real christian—his faith, his hope, his charity; to whatever relates to a spiritual union with Christ—faith in his sacrifice, delight in his person, or an animating hope of his appearance, they remain total and contented strangers. They have neither any share in these things, nor are dissatisfied at the consciousness of not possessing them. They feel no scruple in associating the name of Christ with many, perhaps, of the vices, and with all the spirit of the world. This assumption of the name of Christ, without aspiring to the least resemblance to his character, has done incalculable injury to the interest of religion. To this, more than to any other cause, we must ascribe the little progress vital christianity has made in the world. It is [this] that emboldens the scoffer, encourages the infidel, the profligate, the votaries of paganism, and seals the eyes of the impenitent in every nation in deeper and more death-like slumber: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."* The time is coming when the Lord Jesus will vindicate the honour of that name which wicked men have disgraced. It had been better for them not to have named the name of Christ, than, having named it, not to depart from all evil.

IV. Let me take occasion from these words to urge you to become christians in reality and truth. The name, without the reality, will only augment your guilt and aggravate your doom; but the possession of genuine religion will add unspeakably to your happiness, both here, and hereafter. To be a partaker of Christ is to be at

* Rom. ii. 24.

peace with God; to have peace of conscience, to possess a beneficial interest in all things, and an assured hope of life everlasting. He came that you might have life, and more than life. He came to give rest to your souls, to afford you strong consolation under the sorrows of the world, support in the hour of death, and an entrance, when your mortal course is ended, into the glory to be revealed. He is ready to vanquish your spiritual enemies for you, to cleanse you from all impurities, purge you from all your guilt, and make you "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." While the bare profession of christianity will bestow neither profit nor delight, the possession of it in reality will be replete with both, and will afford the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."* It will deliver you from a thousand snares against which there is no other relief; emancipate you from the bondage of a multitude of degrading passions, and invest you with the "glorious liberty of the children of God." However lightly you may esteem it now, be assured that the moment is coming when, to belong to Christ, to be in union with him, will be felt to be a greater happiness than to be master of the world. Every other honour will fade; every other distinction will pass away; every other enjoyment be exhausted; while the crown of righteousness which Christ will give to his sincere followers will shine with undecaying brightness through the ages of eternity. Let the young be persuaded it will add unspeakable grace to the charms of youth; temper its vivacity with wisdom, tincture its passions with innocence, and form it for a happy, useful, and honourable life. It will be an ornament to youth, a safe directory in the active pursuits of life, a staff and a consolation amidst the decays and infirmities of age. To see you set out in the ways of Christ will afford the highest satisfaction to the church of God; the most exalted pleasure to your parents, who watch every movement of your mind with parental solicitude, ready to rejoice over you with transport when they

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

can say of any of you, as it was said of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth."

V. We cannot but look back with regret to the period when the followers of Christ were known by no other name. Happy period; when, instead of being rent into a thousand parts, and split into innumerable divisions, the church of Christ was "one fold under one Shepherd!" The seamless coat of the Redeemer was of one entire piece from the top to the bottom. The world was divided into two grand parties—christians and pagans. This happy state, we have no doubt, will occur again: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."*

In consequence of a more copious communication of the Spirit, some of our differences of opinion will be removed, and "the shepherds will see eye to eye," and others of them will be lost in the indulgence of christian charity, in the noble oblivion of love.

In the mean time, if party names must subsist, let us carefully watch against a party spirit; let us direct our chief attention to what constitutes a christian, and learn to prize most highly those great truths in which all good men are agreed. In a settled persuasion, that what is disputed or obscure in the system of christianity is, in that proportion, of little importance, compared to those fundamental truths which are inscribed on the page of revelation as with a sunbeam; whenever we see a christian, let us esteem, let us love him; and though he be weak in faith, receive him, "not to doubtful disputation."

* Isaiah xi. 6, 8, 9.

XXXVI.

ON LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, AS A CRITERION OF A STATE OF SALVATION

1 John iii. 14.—*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

As it is an inquiry of the highest moment whether we are in a state of acceptance with God, or under condemnation, we ought carefully to attend to the marks and criterions by which these two opposite states are distinguished in the word of God. The scripture abounds with directions on this subject; so that if we remain in an habitual state of suspense and uncertainty, it is not to be ascribed to deficiency of light in the sacred oracles, but must be imputed, for the most part at least, to the want of strict and impartial inquiry. Too many professors of christianity content themselves without attaining a satisfactory evidence of their real character in the sight of God; hoping all is well, without resting on sure and solid grounds: by which, if their religion is really vain, they incur the charge of presumption; and, if it is genuine, deprive themselves of the richest source of comfort, as well as of motives to the most ardent gratitude. For how is it possible to praise God for a favour which we are not certain we have received? Or if a feeble hope is entitled to devout acknowledgement, our praises must be faint and languid in proportion to the mixture of darkness and uncertainty which attends it. We are exhorted to give all diligence, that we may obtain the full assurance of hope: we should never read in the writings of this eminent apostle the rapturous exclamation, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,"* had he been in that state of suspense respecting his prospects for eternity, in which too many christians allow themselves to remain.

* 1 John iii. 1.

With a view to assist the professors of the gospel, in their attempts to ascertain their real condition, we request your serious attention while we endeavour to explain and illustrate the criterion of character the apostle suggests in the text: "Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Death and life are the two extremes set before us; spiritual death, and spiritual life: for in this sense, it is obvious, the words must be understood. When the apostle speaks of our *passing* from death unto life, the phraseology necessarily implies that death is our natural state as sinners; and, consequently, that he who is perfectly conscious of his having experienced no change, is under no necessity of inquiring farther: he infallibly abideth in death. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death"* A transition from one state to another is supposed in every case where there is a well-founded hope of salvation; and the design of the apostle, in the words before us, is to suggest an infallible criterion of the reality of such a transition.

When he speaks of love to the brethren, we must understand him to mean love to real christians, who are frequently, in the New Testament, distinguished by this appellation: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."† In reproving the Corinthians for their contentious spirit, St. Paul used this language: "Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."‡ In this passage, it is manifest that the term brethren is equivalent to christian, and that it is employed in contradistinction to unbelievers. When the apostle lays down love to real christians, as an infallible sign and token of a justified state, he cannot be supposed to include every sort of attachment which may be felt towards them, from whatever principles or on whatever

* 1 John iii. 14. † 1 John iii. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 6—8.

occasion it arises. No doubt can be entertained that there are circumstances in which the genuine disciples of Christ may be objects of love, without its furnishing the least evidence of a religious character. Religion may have no sort of concern in it. Parents may love their children, children their parents, husbands their wives, and wives their husbands, whatever be the religious character of the party beloved, upon principles merely natural. The natural affections and desires, by which society is cemented, and mankind are bound to each other, can afford, it is evident, no test or criterion of religious principle.

True christians may possess certain qualities, which, according to the principles of human nature, are calculated to command a portion of esteem and affection; such as prudence, generosity, kindness, and fidelity: to which nothing but a brutish insensibility can render men entirely [indifferent]. There are certain social and moral virtues which are so useful to the world, and so attractive in themselves, as to be the natural objects of partiality; and these christianity will improve, rather than impair. We may proceed a step farther, and add, that a christian may be even indebted to his religion for certain qualities which excite attachment, and yet that attachment shall afford no proof of the religious character of him who feels it: "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness."* This goodness, this genuine benevolence of christian deportment, has its charms; and, on a variety of occasions, may excite esteem in persons who have no regard to the principle from whence it flows. "Demetrius had good report of all men, and of the truth itself."† When St. Paul had been inculcating certain christian graces, he adds, He that hath these things "is acceptable to God and approved of men."‡ If we find ourselves overpowered, as it were, and captivated by the display of christian virtue, we are not hence entitled immediately to draw a favourable conclusion respecting our state, without looking deeper, and inquring how we

* Ephes. v. 9. † 3 John 12. ‡ Rom. xiv. 18.

stand affected towards the *principle* whence those virtues emanated.

This leads us to observe, that it is the ground on which our attachment to a christian is founded that can alone afford a favourable decision in this matter. Do we love the brethren *as* brethren, christians *as* christians, on account of the relation they bear to their heavenly Father, and on account of their union to Christ? In any specific case, when we feel warmly attached to a christian, is it founded on this consideration, that he is a christian, a follower of the holy and immaculate Lamb of God? If we can answer this question in the affirmative, St. John authorizes us in deeming it an infallible evidence of our having passed from death unto life. It affords such an evidence in two ways:—

I. Negatively, it proves that we are not of the world.

II. Positively, it demonstrates that we are of God.

I. It proves that we are not of the world: for the world is entirely destitute of an attachment to the disciples of Christ as such. At no period did the world appear favourably disposed to the disciples of Christ as such, or on account of their relation to this their divine Head. Our Lord repeatedly warned his followers to expect just the contrary: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."* "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."† "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."‡

The course of events, from that to the present time, has verified the truth of the Saviour's declaration: "They were hated of all men for his name's sake;" they were "persecuted from city to city,"§ and even the most eminent among them accounted as "the offscouring of all things."‖ In every subsequent age, and in every country, the true disciples of Christ have encountered

* Matt. x. 22. † John xv. 19. ‡ John xvii. 14.
§ Matt. xxiii. 34. ‖ 1 Cor. iv. 13.

opposition, which has been almost invariably more or less violent in proportion to their attachment to the Saviour, to the purity of their faith, and the lustre of their piety. Look at the world at present; view it in this highly favoured nation, furnished as it is with wholesome laws, and restrained from open persecution: Do you perceive the world to evince a predilection for the serious and earnest followers of Christ? Is decided christian piety, conspicuous in the character of any, a passport to distinction and favour? On the contrary: Will a man be better received in worldly circles for being supposed to resemble Christ? No. We can be at no loss to answer these questions, or avoid perceiving that the world continues invariably consistent with itself in "loving its own,"* and none but its own. If, in any instance, its affections stray beyond its own circle; if, in any instance, it extends its favourable regards to a real christian; it is never on account of his being a christian, it is never, as St. John expresses it, "for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in him."† Since this is an unquestionable fact, that the world is thus unfavourably disposed towards serious christians; if it be otherwise with us, it proves that we are "not of the world;"‡ or, in other words, that we have "passed from death unto life."

II. The love of the brethren, as such, affords a positive proof of our being of God.

This will appear in a clearer light, if we consider the grounds on which love to christians proceeds:—

1. To love christians, *as such*, is to love them on account of their relation to God and the Redeemer.

2. On account of their attachment to both.

3. On account of the resemblance which they bear to these divine persons.

1. He who loves christians as such, is attached to them on account of their relation to God. The Supreme Being stands in a peculiar relation to christians, as their God: He is their "covenant God and Father through

* John xv. 19 † 2 John 2. ‡ John xv. 19.

Christ Jesus." They are, emphatically, a peculiar treasure to him, above all the nations of the earth. They are his possession, his inheritance, his people. In every age there have been a people in whom the blessed God claimed a peculiar interest, on whom he fixed his special love, and manifested himself unto them as he does not to the world; a people who were "the temple of God,"* the seat of his special presence, among whom he walked and dwelt. Under the christian dispensation true christians compose this people. In whatever interesting and endearing relation God stood to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; he stands in that same relation to the sincere followers of Christ. They are the objects of that special love, of which the Saviour speaks in these words: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."† To feel attached to christians, on this account, is a proof of a heart well affected towards the Supreme Being, reconciled to his requirements and government: and as "the carnal mind is enmity against God,"‡ it affords an evidence that this enmity is subdued. If we feel favourably towards the domestics of a family, on account of their relation to their master, it is an evidence of affection to the master himself; it is a fruit of it. The relation which christians bear to the Redeemer is still more intimate and endearing: they are the people that were given him to redeem before the world [began]; they are the children for whose sake he took flesh and blood; they are his pupils, his household, and family; nay, more, his spiritual spouse and the members of his mystical body. The love of the brethren contemplates them in that light, and consequently evinces a heart well affected towards their Lord and head. To give "a cup of water in the name of a disciple,"§ shall not lose its reward.

2. On account of their attachment to God, and their zeal for the interest of his glory. This is so essential a

* 1 Cor. iii. 16. † John xvi 27.
‡ Rom. viii. 7. § Matt. x. 42.

part of the christian character, that it cannot be separated from the grounds and reasons of a rational regard for christians, unless we are supposed to be ruled by a blind and unthinking impulse. Our esteem for good men will be intimately blended with the consideration of their being on God's side. While the rest of the world continue in a state of enmity and alienation, we must look upon these as reconciled, as persons who have given a cordial and respectful reception to his ambassadors, and have renewed their alliance, or rather, made their submission, upon the gracious terms he was pleased to propose. "You, that were enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death."* And being reconciled, they are employed to manage his interests, to maintain his honour, and to propagate, as far as possible, the sentiments of loyal obedience by which they themselves are actuated. These views enter deeply into the christian character and calling. How can we give a more unequivocal evidence of a loyal and affectionate disposition towards the prince than by abetting his, in opposition to the disaffected party? As the case will not admit of neutrality—as he, in such a situation, who is not *for* the prince is necessarily looked upon as a rebel, so a cordial attachment to his interests cannot be more decisively expressed than by a determined [adherence] to those who cheerfully submit to his authority, and delight in his government. "He that knoweth God heareth us."†

3. True christians are distinguished by some peculiar traits of resemblance to God and the Redeemer; and this enters into the grounds of that regard for them which the apostle speaks of in the text. They not only adore the divine nature, but are in some degree partakers of it; not only "behold in a glass the glory of the Lord, but are changed into the same image from glory to glory."‡ Their character makes a very distant, it is confessed, but yet a real approach, to the absolute rectitude of the divine, which they [constantly] study and

* Coloss. i. 21, 22 † 1 John iv. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

imitate, [until] they are presented before him unblamable in holiness. In regeneration, some traces of the paternal image are impressed; and with that strange, that more than natural affection it becomes them to feel towards such a parent, they become "followers of God, as dear children."* If they profess to have fellowship with God, they evince that profession to be no empty boast, by walking in the light as he who is in the light. If they profess to know Christ, to have a sacred intimacy with him, they justify the pretension, in some good degree, by walking as he also walked, by doing righteousness as he also did.

To feel an attachment to christians on this account, is an unequivocal proof of a love of rectitude, a love of God, an attachment to those great moral properties in which the true beauty of the divine character consists.

Close with three remarks.

I. The criterion supplied in the text may be inverted. If we do *not* love Christ, other love will discover itself by the choice of our society.

II. It is not only a safe, but a useful criterion suggested in the text, which may be applied to great advantage. We may see the sun through the water when we cannot look upon it in its place in the heavens.

III. It should be our care to improve in this part of the christian character, to abound therein more and more.

Love is the characteristic of the christian.

XXXVII.

ON THE DUTY OF INTERCESSION.

1 Tim. ii. 1.—*I exhort, therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*

I. Duty.

1. The reasons and obligations of prayer arise out of

* Ephes. v. 1.

the fundamental principles of religion—the belief that there is a God, and that he is "the rewarder of such as diligently seek him." The duty of intercession, or praying for others, springs from the relation we stand in to our fellow-creatures. As the former is an essential part of piety, so the latter is a branch of benevolence, not less essential. To love our neighbour as ourselves is the fulfilment of the second table of the law. Unless we believe in the efficacy of prayer, we have no pretensions to the character of christians; but if we are convinced that the prayer of the righteous avails, we have no right to withhold from those we ourselves are bound to love this advantage, especially as it is a benefit which it is always in our power to confer without loss or detriment to ourselves. In almost every other instance, the favour we confer seems at least to come into competition with the claims of self-interest; but in this there is no possible interference or intrusion.

Here only are we able fitly to imitate the Supreme Being, who imparts to all without diminishing his own store. The duty of intercession is also recommended and enforced by this important consideration, that it opens a channel in which the benevolence of every individual may flow. To afford pecuniary relief is the privilege of the rich; to guide the counciis of a nation, of the wise; to ensure victory by arms, of the powerful: but the most obscure person may intercede, and by this means promote the welfare of millions, and affect the destiny of nations.

2. That we are [led] to infer this duty from the general principles of reason and religion. It is implied in the social form of the prayer taught by our Lord, where we are commanded to address God as *our* Father. It is expressly enjoined by apostolic authority, in the passage now under consideration. It is also a duty exemplified by the practice of the most eminent saints. Abraham interceded for Sodom, Job for his friends, Moses for the people of Israel, Samuel for Saul, &c. Intercession formed a principal branch of the priestly function of the law. Our great High-Priest spent some

of the most precious moments, near the end of his earthly course, in interceding with his Father, not only on behalf of his disciples, but of all who should "afterwards believe on his name."

The apostle assures us, it is by virtue of his continued intercession in heaven that he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" so that in his hands it is the refuge of the guilty, the hope of the perishing, a mysterious chain fastened to the throne of God, the stay and support of a sinking world.

II. The benefits of intercession; which may be considered in two lights: as they respect ourselves, and as they regard others.

1. As they respect ourselves.

(1.) It will have a happy tendency to increase our benevolence. As the love of God and of man make up the whole of religion, so there is nothing more likely to promote the love of our fellow-creatures than the bearing them in our minds before the throne of grace. How can we fail to feel concern for the happiness of those for whom we pray?

Either our petitions must be full of hypocrisy, or our good wishes to them must be hearty and sincere. To pray for their welfare, and yet be indifferent, would constitute the grossest dissimulation. In venturing to address the Supreme Being in their behalf, we assume the character of advocates. To be indifferent to their welfare, is to belie the character and betray our trust. That criminal self-love, which is the great reproach of our nature, is grown to such a height, principally in consequence of our habitual inattention to the situation of others. We contemplate ourselves, and our own circumstances, till we almost forget there are any other beings in the world. When we can be prevailed upon to step out of this narrow circle, and look at the distresses and anxieties which those around us have to encounter, a generous compassion is excited, the tenderness of nature is touched, and our own troubles appear light and inconsiderable. Most of our vices, my brethren, may be traced to a want of reflection. And what is

the best remedy for this thoughtlessness and vanity, as far as it respects our duty to others? Intercession.

In solemn intercession with God, the misery, the helplessness, and dependence of our fellow-mortals, or rather of our fellow-immortals, rise in view with all their affecting peculiarities; at those moments when the mind is the most calm, tender, and elevated, at those moments when none but God can enter, when we feel our own nothingness before Him who is all in all. When we have been "spreading before the Lord" the circumstances of an orphan who has no friend, of a widow who has no protector, of an unhappy man who is under the dominion of lusts which are hurrying him fast to eternal destruction; is it possible to rise from our knees without feeling sentiments the most noble, tender, and disinterested; without feeling, in some measure, what Paul felt when he said, "Who is weak and I am not weak; who is offended and I burn not?"

Is it possible to return immediately into ourselves, and to behave with unfeeling insolence, as though the world were made for us; instead of remembering that we are a small part of an immense whole, an inconsiderable member of a vast family.

As we are concerned to employ prayer and intercession for all men, that narrowness of mind which confines our solicitude to a small circle instead of all within our reach, universal good or ill, will be the most effectually promoted or remedied.

If we comply, in any tolerable measure, with this apostolic injunction, by offering solemn prayer for the happiness of the world and the prosperity of the church, for the conversion of the heathen and the salvation of the whole earth, in proportion as our thoughts diffuse themselves, our hearts will necessarily become enlarged.

(2.) It will be the best antidote against all angry and malignant passions.

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2. We may consider the benefit of intercession as it respects others.

There is a remarkable passage in Ezekiel xiv. 14: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God."

From this passage we may infer two things :—First, That there are seasons when even the intercession of the most eminent will not avail; seasons in which it is unalterably determined to inflict punishment. Secondly, we may infer, that these are so rare and so extraordinary, that to declare he will not turn away for intercession, is the strongest token of his fierce indignation.

(1.) If God delights to hear prayer, it is most reasonable to believe he will favourably regard intercessory prayer; for then the supplicant is exercising two most important virtues at once, piety and benevolence. He is then employed in fulfilling the whole law, and makes the nearest approach to the divine nature.

(2.) Examples of its success;—Abraham, Moses, and Job.

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III. General objects of intercession.

1. Our civil governors. We are under the strongest obligations to this, on account of the inestimable benefits involved in good government, which, like the natural health of the body, is indispensably necessary to our happiness, yet is scarcely perceived till it be interrupted. We, of this country, are under peculiar obligations to this duty.

2. The church, "the mother of us all," from whom we are born, at whose breasts we have been nourished with the "sincere milk of the word." "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."*

* Isaiah lxii. 1, 2

Let us pray for its extension, for its peace, for its purity, for the accomplishment of all the promises made to it.

3. The distressed of every description have peculiar claims to our prayers. Indigent christians, who ever appear to be in a peculiar manner the objects of compassion, will share in our petitions to a throne of grace. To pray for others is the best salve and relief of powerless benevolence. For where can we turn our eyes without seeing persons misled by error and delusion which we wish in vain to arrest; made wretched by vices which we cannot reform; or oppressed with misery it is out of our power to avert? Must it not, in such circumstances, furnish the greatest incitement to go into the presence of that Being in whom it is infinite mercy to heal the maladies of mind and body, and to do "for us, and for all men, above all we can ask or think?" When we have thus commended the case of our distressed fellow-creatures to the divine notice—when we have thus committed them, as it were, into the arms of our heavenly Father—we feel calm: our compassion grows softer, while it loses its anxiety; and our benevolence, like his, becomes strong and glowing, without solicitude.

4. Our friends and relatives.

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Application.

XXXVIII.

GOD'S ETERNITY CONSIDERED, IN REFERENCE TO THE SUSPENSION OF HIS PROMISED PURPOSES.

2 Pet. iii. 8.—*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**

That spirit of prophecy with which the holy apostles

* Preached at Leicester, Sunday, January 6th, 1812: the first Sunday in the new year.

were endowed, enabled them to foretell the principal defections from the christian faith which should distinguish the last days,—the papal superstition and infidel impiety.

We have long witnessed the fulfilment of both these predictions: the gross idolatry, cruel edicts, and tyrannical claims of the church of Rome, have been for ages promulgated; and now that superstition appears to be in its dotage, and falling fast into decay, a new progeny has arisen—a scoffing, infidel spirit.

They founded their disbelief of Christ's coming to destroy the world, to judge the wicked, and to reward his servants, on the pretended uniformity of the course of nature. No event which bears any resemblance to that which the gospel foretells, they pretend, has ever taken place. In affirming this, the apostle charges them with "wilful ignorance" [of the destruction of the world by water.]

He then proceeds to declare that the heavens, which at present subsist, are reserved for a similar catastrophe, and are doomed to undergo a more signal overthrow. Nor can any argument be deduced against the certain accomplishment of the divine declaration, from the seeming length of the time during which their execution is delayed: since "one day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

In attempting to improve these words, we shall,

I. Endeavour to illustrate their import, and establish the truth of the proposition which they contain.

II. Show to what particular uses the truth which they exhibit may be applied.

I. Let us attempt to illustrate the assertion, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

It is necessary, in order to enter into the sense and meaning of the apostle in these words, to consider on what occasion they are introduced.

They are designed as an answer to the objections which irreligious scoffers advance against the certainty of the accomplishment of the divine declarations, founded

on its long delay. Impatient and short-sighted mortals are apt to suppose that what is delayed long will never take place; that an event, placed at the distance of many ages, will never arrive; that an evil which has been long apprehended, but through a series of ages has never actually taken place, need be dreaded no more, but may be safely classed among the phantoms of a vain terror.

In reply to this, the apostle states that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years;" and that long and short, when applied to a part of duration, are not the same in his apprehension as ours; that what appears a long time to us, does not appear so to him, whose estimate is so different, and whose views are so much more extended. A thousand years seem to us a very long period, but in his eyes appear extremely short; they are but as a day.

This idea of the different apprehension which God has of time from what we possess, is exhibited in several passages of scriptures: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."* To the same purpose spake the royal Psalmist, in the 39th Psalm: "Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee."†

1. Every portion of duration is something real, and has a true and proper existence; but the epithets great and small, when applied to this, (as well as to any thing else,) are merely comparative. They necessarily imply a comparison of one quantity with another, without which they can never be applied with justice; for what is great compared with one quantity, becomes, at the same moment, little when compared with another, and *vice versâ*.

Thus fourscore years are, at present considered as a great age; but would not have been called so before the [general deluge]. That age is now styled great with

* Psalm xc. 4. † Psalm xxxix 4, 5.

propriety, because it is so, compared with the usual term of life, which is considerably less; and, for an opposite reason, it would, before the Flood, have been styled small, because it would have been so compared with the average term of human life, at that period, which was much greater. We should consider fifty years as forming a very large portion of human life; but the same number of years in the history of an empire would be justly considered small. Thus is the same quantity either great or small, as you place it by the side of something much inferior to it in magnitude, or much superior.

2. Hence it results that absolute greatness belongs only to what is infinite; for whatever falls short of this, however great it may appear, its supposed greatness is entirely owing to the incidental absence of another object that is greater. It may be, it will be, infallibly, reduced to insignificance, the moment it comes into comparison with that which is so prodigiously superior to it.

3. In duration, absolute greatness belongs only to eternity. The epithet great, or whatever other is most expressive of the profoundest astonishment, is, with the utmost propriety, applied to that unfathomable abyss. Incapable of being placed in any light, or brought, even by imagination, into any comparison which should reduce it to insignificance, it asserts its preeminence, and vindicates its majesty, in all places and [times], in all the possible varieties of being, or combinations of thought.

4. We must then conceive that he who has subsisted throughout eternal ages; who knows no "beginning of days, nor end of years:" who possesses eternity; to whom all its parts (if we may be allowed so to speak) are continually open, both past and future; must have a very different apprehension of that inconsiderable portion of it we call time, from creatures who are acquainted with no other. His apprehension, we may easily conceive, will be, in this respect, very different; and that what to us appears a large portion, will, in his eyes, appear very inconsiderable.

Nor let any one here object, and say, it must appear as it is, and, therefore, there is no reason to suppose it appears to him different from what it does to us. No doubt it appears to him exactly as it is. His apprehensions are, unquestionably, agreeable to the nature of things; but it does not follow from thence that it must appear in the same light as it does to us: and if there may be a difference it is surely the highest presumption to make ourselves the standard.

That each portion of duration appears to him real, we admit: we are not contending for its being annihilated in his view. Something it is, and something it appears, unquestionably, in his eyes, who views things as they are; but this is far from proving that a limited portion of duration must appear to him of the same precise magnitude as it does in our eyes.

We know, by experience, how susceptible we are of a diversity of apprehension in this respect; and that at some periods, and in some situations, the same portion of time appears much longer than at others. In circumstances of extreme misery, the moments seem to linger, and the lapse of time is slow. How long would a few minutes appear, passed in excruciating torment! In a season of anxious expectation, which has a portion of misery in it, the same effect is experienced in a lower degree. On the contrary, in a state of enjoyment the hours seem to take wings, and we are but little sensible of the progress of time. When the mind is fully engaged on a delightful subject, when the attention is deeply absorbed in a pleasing train of reflection, we become scarcely conscious that any space of time has elapsed. We must infer from hence that perfect happiness diminishes inconceivably the impression of time; as on the contrary, intense misery increases it.

Among all the conceptions we form of the Supreme Being, there is none the propriety of which we can less doubt than of his perfect happiness; nor have any who have believed on him failed to ascribe to him this perfection in the highest possible degree. He is styled, in scripture, "the blessed and only Potentate," the happy God: and, as he is the fountain of all happiness to his

creatures, it resides in him as in its utmost plenitude—as in its proper seat. If his gracious presence is such a perpetual spring of felicity; if it is at "his right hand there are pleasures for evermore;" how much must he enjoy every moment in the contemplation of his perfections, in the survey of his works and designs, and in the possession of his consciousness of his supreme dominion and transcendent excellence, his unutterable and unbounded felicity!

Conceive, then, of a Being absolutely independent, and existing from eternity; in the enjoyment of infinite happiness, always master of his purpose, never perplexed with difficulty, never agitated with anxious expectation, resting on his own all-sufficiency, and viewing with complacency each attribute of his infinite fulness. What, then, is an age in his view, compared to what it is in the eyes of mortals? Surely, with such a Being "one day *must* be as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Admiration is, in most instances, the offspring of ignorance; at least, it implies a limitation of the views; so that an object shall appear great in the contemplation of one man, which, to another of more elevated and capacious powers, shall appear small and inconsiderable. But, to an infinite understanding, nothing can appear great that does not partake of its own infinity. The Supreme Mind, and that alone, grasps eternity, possesses it every moment. He not only comprehends, but constitutes, eternal duration, by enduring "from everlasting to everlasting;" for there could be no eternal duration if something did not always endure: we cannot conceive of its existence but as a mode of being, and that being is God.

The measure by which he estimates time is, consequently, quite different from that which we are compelled to apply, in its contemplation. We measure one portion of duration by another; He measures time by eternity. How inconceivably different must be the apprehension arising from these different methods of considering it! In attempting to form a conception of endless duration, we are under the necessity of accumulating ages upon ages, and multiplying millions of ages into millions; accompanied with this conviction, that we have arrived no nearer to an adequate comprehension of it; that there remains beyond us an infinitely larger space than we have travelled over. To this view it is every moment present: to him it is familiar, as his element, his habitation; and from that stupendous elevation, he looks down upon the scenes of time and the lapse of ages. These reflections may assist us to conceive, how to him one day must necessarily be as "a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

II. The use to which the doctrine of the text may be applied.

1. It removes the ground of objection against the fulfilment of the divine declarations, arising from the accomplishment being long delayed.

If some time is to be allotted for preparation, some space for operation, it surely belongs to God to determine of what extent it should be: this, perhaps, you will admit. But why so long a space? But in whose eyes is it long? In yours, who are but the creatures of a day, who are, from the narrowness of your views, liable to perpetual illusions and deception? or in God's? And, amidst this diversity of apprehension, can you hesitate in deciding which is correct?

No slackness in his purpose is then to be imputed to him according to what men account slackness; no unsteadiness in his resolution, no revolution of his determination.

Nothing is to be concluded in favour of the impunity of prosperous vice, nor of the final neglect of oppressed and afflicted piety. The prosperity of the wicked is but for a moment: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading like a green bay-tree: yet I passed by, and he was not; yea, I sought him out, but he could not be found."

2. It accounts for the peculiar cast of scripture language, when employed in announcing the coming of Christ, and the end of all things.

3. Though we cannot immediately change our senses, let us endeavour to conform our ideas and convictions to the dictates of Infallible Wisdom on this subject. Let us consider the whole duration of things here as very short.

The more we drink into the spirit of the Scriptures, the more will this be the case.

XXXIX.

THE LORD'S-DAY COMMEMORATIVE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

PSALM cxviii. 24.—*This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

THIS Psalm appears to have been composed on David's accession to the dominion over all Israel; when he had subdued his enemies around, and completely established himself as a great and victorious prince. It was probably set to music on the anniversary of David's coronation. That was a most joyful event. As a very important passage in [this psalm] is applied to Christ, both by himself and his apostles, no doubt can be entertained of its referring, in its fullest and sublimest sense, to the person and kingdom of the Redeemer. In this light, I shall consider it in the following discourse: and as the Lord's-day is appointed to commemorate the resurrection of our Saviour, at which his kingdom commenced, I shall endeavour to invite your attention to those sources of religious joy which are opened by that event. The event which this day is designed to celebrate is calculated to afford joy on the following accounts:—

I. On this day the purchase of our redemption was completed.

In order to render the salvation of sinners consistent with the holiness and justice of the divine nature, some great moral expedient became necessary. The expedient which the Divine Wisdom adopted, was the substitution

of the Son of God in the room of sinners; who freely consented to assume our nature, and to sustain those sufferings which the Father deemed requisite for the satisfaction of his own justice, and especially the suffering of death. Though the merit of his obedience is more eminently ascribed in scripture to his death, ("He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,") yet we are justified in considering all the humiliation he endured, during his abode on earth, as forming a part of his merit, and, consequently, of the price of our redemption. His voluntary condescension in coming into our world, his assuming our nature itself, with all its infirmities and sorrows, formed an important part of his merit, because he was under no previous obligation to do it.

His merit, as far as it was the result of his sufferings, was composed of three parts:—

1. His assumption of human nature itself; which, as he was under no previous obligation of doing, was in the highest degree meritorious.

2. The endurance of evils, which were not necessarily included in it; such as poverty, contempt, and innumerable privations.

3. [His] death; the efficacy of which was specific, resulting not merely from it, as suffering, but as that precise species of suffering which the law inflicted on disobedience: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die." "The wages of sin is death." The pain of death terminated when he cried, "It is finished!" but the humiliation still remained until his resurrection.

Justice is now satisfied, "the law is magnified and made honourable." The majesty of heaven and earth appear in the person of the Saviour, with an inviting benignity dressed in smiles proclaiming peace from the cross "to them that are nigh, and to them that are far off."

II. On this day the character of Christ was illustriously vindicated, and his pretensions fully asserted and sustained.

During his life he laboured under the accusation of

deceiving the people; his miraculous works were imputed to diabolical agency, and death [was] inflicted on him under the character of a blasphemer, because he affirmed himself to be the Son of God: He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."* "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I do these things."†

The grand proof of Christ's Messiahship is his resurrection.

To witness his resurrection was the principal office of the apostles: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until that same day that he was taken up, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."‡ It was the evidence to which he had himself appealed: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again."§ It was such an attestation of divine approbation as was never conferred before or since.

III. This day afforded to Christ a signal triumph over his enemies. During his abode in the grave, his enemies exulted, the world rejoiced, his disciples were rejected and dispersed. The desponding language of his disciples, on their way to Emmaus: "We thought it had been he that should have redeemed Israel; and, besides all this, it is the third day since these things were done." The hopes of the church were sunk to the lowest point of depression: it seemed as if the name of Jesus and his cause were for ever entombed in his grave. But how gloriously was the scene reversed by his resurrection! The person of the Saviour was for ever removed beyond the reach of further assault, and his cause was more than ever triumphant: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord

* Rom. i. 4.
‡ Acts i. 21, 22.
† John viii. 28
§ John ii. 19.

Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."* Greater miracles were wrought by the apostles, in his name, than any which he wrought himself. From thence we must date the extensive and successful propagation of the gospel. The Spirit descended, and the eleven apostles were sent forth into all the world. He then began to assume the sceptre of universal dominion, to sit upon the throne of David, to rule and to establish it for ever and ever. "All power was given unto him in heaven and in earth."

IV. On this day, our Lord gained an everlasting victory over the last enemy, and triumphed over death in that nature which had always been subject to its dominion before. Death had reigned, not only from Adam to Moses, but through all subsequent generations, subjecting the whole race, and trampling them with indignity in the dust. Millions and millions had descended into his dreary prison, of which none had ever been able to break the bars, and escape from the confinement. The king of terrors maintained an undisputed dominion, a despotic sway, over all the past generations of mankind. Some were indulged with a larger respite than others. Some descended into his mansions with more funereal pomp and pageantry; but when arrived there, they all met with the same reception: the same darkness enveloped them; and they equally said, "to corruption, Thou art my sister; to the worm, Thou art my mother." But on this day a new order of things commenced. Death, for the first time, encountered an enemy more powerful than himself; and though he seemed to prevail for a moment, he was for ever foiled in the conflict. He received into his territory, in the guise of a captive, him whom he found a conqueror. [Christ] exhibited the first specimen of immortal man: not that shadow of immortality, consisting in being remembered and celebrated for ages by creatures who are hastening to the tomb; but an immortality, consisting in a form which is imperishable,—a glorious being, over which

* Acts iv. 33.

death hath no more power, which will subsist in undecaying youth and splendour when the heavens are no more. This is the pattern and example to which the children of the resurrection will be conformed.

V. On this day we are called to rejoice in that sure and certain prospect which the resurrection of Christ affords to all true believers, of ascending with him to heaven, and of there partaking with him of his glory. As he was the substituted representative of true believers, what was accomplished in him at his resurrection, will, ere long, be accomplished in them: the victory over death which he acquired he will impart to them; the glory which he has received he will give to them; the eternal rest, into which he has entered at his ascension, he hath prepared for them:—"Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming." In nothing that our Saviour suffered or obtained, is he to be considered in the light of a private character. Nothing was suffered on his own account, or effected merely with a view to his own benefit. "As he bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and "died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," the rewards which he merited, the dignity to which he was exalted, are not confined to his own person, but accrue to every part of his mystical body.

XL.

CHRIST'S CARE OVER CHURCHES AND MINISTERS

Rev. ii. 1.—*These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*

As Jesus Christ is the "true light" of the world, so a principal means by which he dispenses his illumination, is by the appointment of a stated ministry, and the formation of christian churches. By concentrating and uniting their efforts; by collecting their information, their zeal and piety into a [point]; they dispel much of

the darkness of the present state. This state is frequently, in scripture, compared to night: "The night is far spent; the day is at hand."* During the prevalence of this darkness, previous to the rising of the "Sun of righteousness," he has placed his ministers as stars in the firmament, and appointed his churches to be as lamps or candlesticks.

By the representation of the text, we are strongly reminded of the sole end and design for which ministers are constituted and churches formed: it is to dispense spiritual illumination to a benighted world; it is that they may shine with knowledge and holiness. As far as they answer this purpose, they are useful and important; in proportion as they lose sight of it, they forfeit every just claim to esteem, and sink into insignificance and contempt. It is their duty to "hold forth the word of life."† The light they are appointed to dispense is the pure doctrine of Christ, exhibited by an open profession, and sustained and recommended by the virtues of a holy life. When churches depart from the essential truths of christianity, they become incapable of answering the end of their institution. They are no longer useful lights, but delusive meteors; which, instead of guiding souls to heaven, mislead and betray them to destruction.

False teachers are compared by Jude to "wandering stars,"‡ in opposition to those mentioned in the text, who are supposed to continue in their station, and afford a regular and steady light. In representing Christ's ministers under the metaphor of stars, it is not improbable there may be an allusion to Daniel: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."§

The appellation of "the bright and morning star" is assumed by our Saviour himself; and as ministers, though at an immeasurable distance, are yet nearest him

* Rom. xiii. 12.
† Philip. ii. 16.
‡ Jude 13.
§ Dan. xii. 3.

in the official rank in the church, so ought they most to resemble him in the distinguishing features of the christian character. The church is represented as having on her head "a crown of twelve stars,"* which denote the twelve apostles. John saw seven of these stars and lamps: which may either refer to the precise number of the churches to whom Christ sent distinct epistles; or, as seems more likely, the number is adopted as a mystical number, agreeable to the arrangement of this book, which consists of seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, and contains a distinct [intimation] of the seven spirits that are before the throne. There is contained an allusion to the golden candlestick in the temple, which consisted of seven branches. "The eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth."†

Let us proceed to consider—

I. What is meant by our Lord's holding the stars, his ministers, in his hand.

His holding the stars in his hand implies the appointing them to the work of the ministry. His qualifying them for the successful discharge of it, and his absolute [disposal and direction] of them, and all their concerns.

1. It implies that it is he who appoints them to their office. From Him, as the sole Head of the Church, they derive their commissions. They are his servants and messengers. He sometimes describes them by appellations peculiar to the Jewish church;—as when he tells the Jews, "Behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes;"‡—but more frequently by titles peculiar to the New Testament. "When he ascended up on high, he gave some, apostles; some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."§ Hence St. Paul gives thanks to Jesus Christ, who had enabled him, "for that he counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry."‖

2. It is he who imparts the qualifications which are necessary for the effectual discharge of their office:

* Rev. xii. 1. † Zech. iv. 10. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 34.
§ Ephes. iv. 8, 11. ‖ 1 Tim. i. 12.

"And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."* All that love to souls, and that regard to the advancement of the divine honour, which are so essential to a Christian minister, proceed from him. Ministerial talents are his gift. The continual supplies of grace, which are requisite in the whole course of the christian ministry, proceed from him: "The supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus:"† "There are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord."

3. They are, with all their concerns, at his absolute disposal. He, by the secret arrangements of his providence, appoints "the bound of their habitation," and allots their respective fields of labour, not unfrequently in a manner entirely foreign from their expectation; so he assigns them the measure of their success, setting before them, on various occasions, "an open door, which no man can shut."‡ (Speak of the angel of the church of Philadelphia.)

II. The import of his walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

1. It imports an accurate inspection of the state [of every church], both as a society and as individuals. "I know thy works," is a declaration with which he frequently prefaces his admonitory epistles. Nothing in the behaviour of Christian churches escapes his notice, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire." He remarks the attention, or inattention, with which his messages are received; he observes who are formal and lukewarm, and who fervent and sincere in their worship; who are diligent in their attendance on the means of grace, and who are glad to avail themselves of trivial excuses for neglecting them. He notices all the different degrees of seriousness which professing christians bring into the divine service. There is not a sigh from the contrite, not a tear of penitential sorrow, or of tender joy, that escapes his notice. "He looks not at outward appearances, but at the heart." He perceives

* 1 Tim. i. 14. † Philip. i. 19. ‡ Rev. iii. 8.

the difference betwixt those churches which have left their "first love," and those who are diligently pressing on to perfection; betwixt those that are indifferent to the extension of his kingdom, and those who are incessantly labouring and praying for its enlargement; those who decline to the paths of error, and "hold the doctrine which he hates," and those who "hold fast the form of sound words."

2. His walking amongst them implies that his business, so to speak, lies in the management of his churches. It is his "building," his "husbandry,"* The interest of his church is peculiarly his interest, in the maintenance of which his presence and grace are especially exerted. He walks amongst the churches as a proprietor in his field.

He superintends the affairs of the world, but always with a view to the enlargement and prosperity of his church. The church is his mystical body, with which he is most intimately and inseparably united. He rules the world by his sceptre, but he gladdens the church by his presence. The former consists only of his subjects, this of his brethren and sisters.

3. His walking amongst them denotes the complacency he takes in them. Something of complacency seems to be implied in this expression, "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."†

(Apply the whole.)

* 1 Cor. iii. 9. † Lev. xxvi. 11, 12

XLI.

NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

Rev. xxi. 22.—*And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

This book contains a prophecy of the state of the church, from the time in which it was communicated, to the consummation of all things. It includes the principal revolutions to which it was to be subject, and the assaults it was to sustain, during a series of ages, from the time of John to the end of the world. The chapter out of which my text is taken, is, with great probability, considered as a description of the heavenly world. In the chapter preceding, we have a striking description of the day of judgement. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."* After this, a new heaven and a new earth was described very similar to the language of Peter: "For we look for a new heaven, and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness." The perfection of the state represented here is such as can agree only with the heavenly world. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."† Among the other privileges, access to the tree of life is specified, evidently denoting a state of immortality. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree

* Rev. xx. 11, 12. † Rev. xxi. 4.

of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."*

Considering this as a description of the heavenly state, we shall first endeavour to point out the meaning and import of this declaration, and next attempt some practical improvement.

I. Let us endeavour to point out the meaning and import of this declaration, "I saw no temple therein," &c.

1. It cannot be intended to insinuate that heaven will not be a state of devotion. It is in every part of the word of God, and in this book in particular, represented as a state of the highest and most exalted devotion.† Devotion will then be carried to its highest perfection. The absence of the temple does not denote the absence of devotion: as it is the noblest employment of creatures here, it is impossible to suppose it will be neglected in the heavenly world.

Nor is it intended to intimate, that there will not be most glorious and supernatural manifestations of God in that state. *Having* the glory of *God* is a most distinguishing part of its description. The peculiar presence of God is announced as one of its [especial] privileges.‡ "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell amongst them." Contrasting the present with the future state, the apostle says, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: then shall I see as I am seen, and know as I am known."

The import of this declaration may probably be expressed in the following particulars. There will be no place in the celestial world, distinguished by peculiar tokens of the divine presence above others.

(1.) A temple is a building set apart exclusively for the honour of God, where he was accustomed to manifest his presence by a visible symbol, in distinction from other places. The ancient temple was divided into three compartments. The court, at the door of which stood the brazen altar of burnt offering. To this the victims

* Rev. xxii. 14 † Rev. xv. 2, 3; xiv. 2, 3. ‡ Rev. xxi. 3.

were brought, and the Israelitish people had access. The second was the court of the priests, at the farthest end of which stood, on one side, the golden altar of incense, and on the other, the table of the shew-bread. This it was the prerogative of the priests only to enter. It was styled in distinction from the other, "the Holy Place." The third was the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, or "Holy of Holies," where was placed the mercy-seat, surrounded on each side by the cherubim, whose wings were stretched out so as to cover it; and upon it the Supreme Being manifested himself in a visible glory, like a king sitting upon his throne. Hence he was invoked by the saints of old, as "he that sat between the cherubim." This, which was the inmost recess of the temple, was the chamber of audience, and the place of the oracle. And to this the high priest only had access, once a year, upon the great day of atonement, which was the tenth of the seventh month. No other part of the Holy Land was ordinarily favoured with similar manifestations. As it was the peculiar distinction of the temple at Jerusalem it conferred a [specific] sanctity on the place, whence it was styled the Holy City.

In heaven, the presence of God will not be restricted to a particular place: it will diffuse itself everywhere; in consequence of which the whole will become holy. There will be no part of it consecrated as a local temple, because the whole will be a temple. As it is said of the sun, that the city will have no need of it, because the Lord God will enlighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof; so it will be with respect to [this] temple. The whole will be so illuminated with the glory of God, so adorned with the most impressive indications of his august presence, that there will be no distinction possessed by any part above another. Every region of it will be equally replete with the glory of God, which is the [thing] chiefly meant by the latter clause of the text, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the temple thereof." The inhabitants will have no occasion to remove from one place to another, or to approach to a particular spot, in order to [behold] the

glory of God; but, where they [are, they] will be alike sensible of his presence, and equally awed and transported by it. None will have occasion to adopt the language of the devout Psalmist, and say, "When shall I come and appear before God?" for they shall always appear before him alike; "they shall continually behold his face, and serve him day and night in his temple."

In the passage just now quoted, we find mention made of a temple; which is perfectly consistent with the declaration of the text, [in which] John declares he saw none. He is now describing heaven itself: in heaven he perceived no temple, no particular place assigned by way of distinction for the worship of God. In the former, he intends to represent heaven itself under the appellation of a temple.

(2.) A temple is distinguished by having certain services allotted to it, which it is unlawful to perform elsewhere. Thus, after the temple at Jerusalem was erected, it became criminal to perform certain rites of worship in any other place. The burning of incense, and the offering of sacrifice, were limited and restrained to that spot.* "Take heed to thyself that thou offerest not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there shalt thou offer thy burnt offerings, and there shalt thou do all that I command thee." "Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy oil, or of thy vine, or of the firstlings of thy herds, or of thy flock, nor any of the vows which thou vowest, nor thy free-will offerings, or heave offerings of thy hand; but thou must eat them before the Lord thy God, in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose."

No distinction will subsist betwixt the different mansions in our heavenly Father's house. As all will be equally holy, the same modes of worship will pervade the whole; and whatever will be suitable to one place will be suitable to all. In this sense, John saw no temple.

* Deut. xvi. 5: xv. 20: xii. 13

(3.) During the continuance of the temple, regular sacred seasons were appointed, at which all the males of the nation were commanded to appear before God. Three times a-year, all the male part of the nation was ordered to present themselves before God at Jerusalem, the place which he chose to record his name. These periods were, the feast of the *passover*, the feast of *pentecost*, and the feast of *tabernacles*, or of ingathering at the close of the year. Besides these solemn anniversaries, there were certain hours of prayer, mentioned in the third chapter of Acts, at which devout men were wont to frequent the temple, to present their supplications to God: these were the third, the sixth (corresponding to our noon), and the ninth hour. In the heavenly world, no distinction of sacred times and seasons will be known: no weekly rest, no annual solemnities, will be longer recognized; the devotion of its blessed inhabitants will be one eternal Sabbath. "There remaineth a rest," *(a keeping of Sabbath,)* saith St. Paul, "for the people of God." Here the pious look forward with delight to the recurrence of the sacred day, when they may dismiss all earthly cares, and devote themselves more immediately to the service of the Most High: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up unto the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand in thy courts, O Jerusalem!"

(4.) This declaration is probably intended to intimate, that devotion will no longer form a distinct part of the employment of the heavenly world, but that it will be intimately incorporated with all their actions and sentiments. In the present condition of our being, so many wants arise from the body, so many necessities of a worldly nature to be provided for, that it is but a small part of their time that many can devote to the offices of religion. We have two worlds with which we are concerned—the world that now is, and that which is to come; and these give birth to two distinct interests—the interests of the body, and those of the soul. Though the latter are infinitely the most important, the former cannot, and ought not, to be neglected: they demand

a large portion of our exertions, and, with too many, absorb the whole of their attention and solicitude. "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is the general inquiry. Truly holy persons employ their hands upon the world, and set their hearts on heaven; but even these find it difficult, amidst the distractions and cares of the present state, to keep their affections set upon the things that are above. Their souls too often cleave unto the dust, and their hearts are sometimes overcharged. Nothing of that nature will be experienced there: "God will be all in all." No wants will there remain to be supplied, no dangers to be averted, no provision to be made for futurity. The contemplation and enjoyment of the Great Eternal will present an ample occupation of the mind for ever and ever.

It may seem, in our present dark and imperfect state, difficult to conceive how the exercises of the mind and heart on the blessed God can employ an eternity. But we must remember that the object is infinite; that the creation is but an atom or a point, compared to the immensity of his being and perfections; and if, in the survey and examination of the creation, the mind feels such ample scope, we need not wonder if its great Author supply an infinitely wider range of operation, when he lays himself open to the view of his creatures, and permits them to "see him as he is." When we possess an immediate and intuitive view of his nature and excellencies, and no longer see him "through a glass darkly, but face to face," no doubt, the powers of the soul will find full employment, without danger of feeling itself straitened, in him "who is all in all." There are, probably, faculties in the soul which are here either not apparent at all, or are very imperfectly developed. Among these, the powers of action and contemplation will be perfectly combined: the exercise of the reason will not interfere with that of the heart; but we shall be capable of feeling all the ecstasies of devotion, in conjunction with mental operations, with which it is at present scarcely compatible. We shall not worship at one time, and at another be engaged in active pursuits and employments; but while we burn with the highest ardours of devotion, we shall be capable of doing the will of God, of executing those mysterious purposes which it is his wish we should accomplish.

The pursuit of truth, the enjoyment of good, and the actual business of life, require distinct portions of time. While the soul is intensely employed in comparing its ideas, the movements of the heart languish, or are suspended. It is very difficult, in the present state, to be ardent and speculative, for the understanding and the heart to be both intensely engaged; but this is owing to the limitation of our capacity. It is incident to a state of imperfection, which we may easily suppose will be done away.

For a similar reason, the active pursuits of life are scarcely compatible with the attainment of knowledge. In our present gross, corporeal state, the effort necessary to keep up the animal machine in a state of intense exertion exhausts the vigour of the mind, and leaves little room for the powerful exercise of the reason. In eternity, we may readily conceive it will be otherwise: this inert and sluggish body will be replaced by a spiritual body; motion will be performed without fatigue; the body will be a fit instrument for executing the purposes of the soul.

At present, the occupations in which we are engaged have no immediate relation to the Deity; they are capable of being sanctified only by a general intention of pleasing God, while it is impossible to advert incessantly to his presence, or to make him always the immediate object of our thought. In eternity, the capacity will be so enlarged and extended, that the idea of God will be incessantly impressed, the beams of his glory will perpetually penetrate the heart, and the fire of love will never cease to burn upon the altar.

Improvement.

I. How impossible for undevout persons to be fitted

for heaven; how impossible for them to relish its employments or enjoyments.

II. How anxious should we be to improve the seasons of devotion and the means of grace, as a preparation for heaven.

III. What a well-founded hope of heaven may they indulge, who feel a supreme delight in the exercises of religion. Such are evidently ripening for an invisible and eternal state.

IV. Hence we perceive the exact correspondence of the employment of the heavenly world to the taste and disposition of real christians.*

* Preached at Leicester, Sunday morning, August 13th, 1815.

END OF VOL. V

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WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

AND A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS.

Originally published in Six Volumes, 8vo.

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D., F.R.A.S.

LATE PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY

VOL. VI.

SERMONS.—MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.—INDEX.

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SERMONS.

I.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

ISAIAH xxxi. 3.—*The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.**

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, APRIL 14, 1822, AND AT BRISTOL IN AUGUST, 1824.]

AMONG the sins to which the ancient Israelites were addicted, one of the most prevailing was a disposition, in seasons of invasion or calamity, to place confidence in the power of surrounding nations, and to seek the assistance of their sovereigns instead of trusting in the living God. By this they frequently incurred divine chastisement, and in some instances even divine dereliction. Egypt, being the largest monarchy in their immediate neighbourhood, was frequently their refuge in times of distress and difficulty. Their guilt in thus departing from God was greatly aggravated, on account of the intimate relation which he sustained to them as their king and sovereign, by virtue of which he had engaged to protect them by his mighty power so long as they adhered to his service and allegiance; while the frequent manifestation of his uncontrollable dominion over the natural world, displayed in the signal deliverances he had wrought for them, rendered the transfer of their confidence from him to "an arm of flesh," equally

* Printed from the Notes of Joshua Wilson, Esq. See Vol. V. pp. 113—118, for Mr. Hall's brief notes of the same sermon.

criminal and foolish. "Woe to them," saith the prophet, "that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!"* Then, in a strain of pointed irony, he severely reproves their preference, by reminding them that God possessed those qualities of foresight and force, which justified entire dependence; and that whatever grounds for confidence they fancied to exist in the character of the Egyptian potentate, were found in a degree infinitely greater in that of the Almighty—"Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: (alluding to the conduct of Pharaoh, who had often broken the promises and violated the engagements he had made) but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity:" He will not only rise against the workers of iniquity, but against their helpers also; and will cause them all to fail together; "for the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit."

In these words we are reminded of an important and infinite disparity between God and man; arising from a great peculiarity in the character of the former, which rendered the Egyptian monarch and his cavalry infinitely inferior to Him in power, and all those other qualities which entitle the possessor of them to confidence and trust.

It is my design to suggest to you some of those views of the character of the Supreme Being, inseparably connected with the spirituality of his nature, in which he stands contrasted with all other beings whatsoever.

I. The spirituality of the Deity is intimately connected with the possession of that infinite, unlimited power, which renders him the proper object of entire confidence.

There is a vulgar prejudice in favour of matter and against spirit, as if the former were possessed of great force, while the latter is only invested with a feeble degree of energy. This prejudice arises from our mis-

* Isaiah xxxi. 1.

taking secondary and remote effects for causes, allowing them therefore to terminate our view, instead of ascending from those laws of nature which God has established to himself, the supreme cause. Hence, in contemplating the operations of the elements of nature in producing great and important changes, we are apt to think of matter, and of matter in its most gross and palpable form. These changes certainly indicate the existence of great power, which, at the first view, we are apt to connect with the material part of the system. We are also practically acquainted with the mechanical forces, and, seeing that these are exerted through the medium of matter, we are thence led to suppose that to be the source of power. We find that we are incapable of operating on matter, of moving even an atom by a mere act of our will; a material medium is necessary to enable us to produce the slightest change on the objects of nature; and, if a material substance is brought to bear upon them, the most important effects are produced. We have no power of operating on the objects immediately around us, but by means of our bodies; and the changes that take place are always connected with certain motions in them, which enable us to come into contact with the visible world. Hence we are apt to terminate our ideas of power in matter. But in these cases it is *mind*, and mind alone, which is the seat of power. The influence which our bodies have upon other bodies, whereby their relative position is changed, is merely a secondary effect—an effect of that act of will which produces the motion of our bodies. The power by which all changes are effected through the instrumentality of the body, resides immediately in the mind. It is that mysterious principle called Will, which the Divine Being has invested with a control over the various parts of our bodies; nor have we power to alter the state of a single external thing, in the least degree, except by means of volition, which is a mental power, operating immediately upon the body. No other account can be given of this capacity, but that the Divine Being has endowed us with instantaneous control over the

muscular parts of our bodies. We can conceive nothing intermediate between the act of the will and the movement of the muscles. So complete indeed is the dominion of mind over matter, that the moment we will a certain motion in the body, it takes place, and thus only are we enabled to effect changes in the system of surrounding nature. We probably derive our idea of power from the changes we see effected in this manner; but all these changes resolve themselves into acts of the will. It is therefore plain that power resides in the *mind*, and that matter is in these respects only the instrument of mind, which in the first instance acts, which alone properly acts, and becomes the author of all the subsequent changes. Mind, indeed, to a certain extent and within a certain sphere, is absolute power; and whatever motions it wills, instantly take place. Though we are far from supposing for a moment that the Divine Being is the soul of the universe, or that he bears the same relation to the visible world as the soul does to the body —a notion replete with absurdity and impiety; yet the power which the mind exerts over the whole of our corporeal system, may afford an apt illustration of that control which the Deity exercises over the universe. We will a certain motion in the muscles of our body, and immediately it takes place; nothing is perceived to intervene between the act of the will and the subsequent motion. By the mysterious constitution of our nature we are capable from a very early period of life, of putting into instantaneous motion the right set of muscles for producing a certain change; but nothing intervenes between the volition and the change. In vain do we inquire how this takes place, because we can find nothing which comes between the operation of the will and the change produced in our corporeal frame.

Conceive the Divine Being as a spirit, having the same dominion over the invisible universe, in every part of space, as that which our minds possess over every portion of our bodies; and then you will perceive, faintly at least, the origin of that power, the indications of which are so visible throughout the universe. He has only to

will the most important changes, and they are instantly accomplished. "He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast." "He said, Let there be light, and there was light." No causes intervene between the volition and the change which ensues; for in the Deity to will is to effect. Being an infinite Spirit, and coming into immediate contact with all parts of the universe, he is capable, by a mere act of will, of effecting all possible changes in the same manner, but in an infinitely higher degree, as we are capable, by an act of our will, of causing certain motions in the muscular parts of our body, and thus producing changes in the external objects around us.

We shall find it impossible to give any account of innumerable changes which are continually taking place in the visible world, without tracing them up to mind. There cannot be a clearer proof of a Deity, than the existence of motion. This evidently appears not to be essential to matter, because we see a very great portion of the material universe without it. Not being, therefore, an original state of matter, but merely an incident, it must be an effect. But since matter, not being intelligent, cannot be the cause of its own motion—and yet we cannot conceive of any atom beginning to move with out a cause—that cause must be found out of itself. Whatever may be the nearest cause, or the number of secondary causes; though innumerable portions of matter may be reciprocally or successively moved; though the series of links in the chain through which motion is propagated may be indefinitely multiplied; we must, in order to arrive at the origin of these various phenomena, ascend to mind, terminate our inquiries in spirit; nor can we account for the beginning, much less for the continuance and extension of motion, unless we trace it to the will of that Being, who is the cause of all causes—the great original mover in the universe. Power is, therefore, the attribute of mind; instrumentality that of body. When we read, in the Old Testament, of the most exalted achievements ascribed to angelic spirits, we cannot suppose that it is owing to any gross materialism

which they possess; on the contrary, they have no bodies capable of being investigated by our senses; and in proportion as they are more attenuated, do they possess greater power. We have reason to believe that all finite minds are under the direction of the Supreme Power, who, without destroying their accountability or interfering with their free agency, makes all their operations subservient to the accomplishment of his counsels. Hence all opposition to the Deity is beautifully represented by Isaiah, as if the instrument should rebel against him that wields it, as if "the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up;" or "the staff should lift up itself against him that is no wood."* All created beings, in this respect, are but instruments in the hand of the Deity, whose will is sovereign over them.

The Divine Being, as the great Father of spirits, combines within himself all the separate energies found in the universe. He is the source, origin, and fountain of all power diffused through creation. The very minds which he has formed are kept in mysterious subordination, and can never overstep the bounds he has assigned them. "Once have I heard this, that power belongs unto God."

II. The spirituality of God stands in close and intimate connexion with his invisibility, or that property by which he is completely removed from the notice of our senses, especially that of sight.

This is one of the perfections claimed by him in sacred writ, one of the attributes which the Scriptures perpetually ascribe to him. He is styled by the apostle Paul the "King eternal, immortal, *invisible*."—"the blessed and only Potentate,"—"*whom no man hath seen, nor can see*."† "*No man*," said our Saviour, "*hath seen the Father at any time*." He is the *invisible God*. Were he the object of sight, he must be limited. Whatever manifestations he may make of himself, it is utterly impossible that his essence, or He himself, should ever be the object of our corporeal sensations; for these extend

* Isaiah x. 15; Bishop Lowth's translation. † 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

only to visible and sensible objects. He cannot therefore be represented to the human imagination, or be figured out by any art or skill of man; agreeably to the sublimest discourse of the apostle to the Athenians.* He was pleased, indeed, in former times, to afford to his ancient people in the wilderness, and afterwards in the tabernacle and the temple, some outward tokens of his presence, but these were not any display of his essence. Moses, when warning the people against forming any graven image, or picture of the Deity, expressly declares that they "saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto them in Horeb."† The third commandment contains an express injunction against exhibiting any representation of the Deity to the eyes of mankind. Hence we may perceive the great impiety of those sects of christians, in different parts of the world, especially of the church of Rome, who have attempted to paint and figure out the persons of the Trinity, in express contradiction to this divine edict, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or the likeness"‡ &c. The worship of that erroneous and idolatrous church consists very much in acts of homage paid to these external representations; and, though her advocates profess that they are merely required as media, yet we cannot but fear, that the view is too often terminated upon them, and the Divine Being thus supplanted of that spiritual worship which he claims in consequence of being a spirit. We need not wonder, therefore, at the pains taken by that church to suppress the second commandment: entirely omitting that precept in some of her formularies, and dividing another commandment into two to make up the number ten. The necessary effect of any attempt to exhibit the Deity to the human senses, by pictures or images, must be to degrade to an incalculable degree, our conceptions of him; partly as it circumscribes what is unlimited, and partly as it is adapted to mingle the passions and affections of the human nature with our conception of the Divine. The notion of an Infinite

* Acts xvii. 24—29. † Deut. iv. 15. ‡ Exod. xx. 4, 5.

Being is utterly inconsistent with any outward figure or shape, which would confine, to a certain determinate portion of space, Him who declares of himself, "*Do not I fill heaven and earth?*" and thus limit the infinite presence and majesty of the great Eternal. No sooner do men attempt to make the Deity an object of their senses, than they begin to think him altogether such an one as themselves. Descending from the high and holy place where the Divine Being dwells, the mind, accustomed to contemplate him under a visible form, gradually sinks lower and lower in approximation to its own level, till at last men come to conceive of him as compassed with infirmities like themselves. Hence, where such representations of Deity have prevailed, images of other beings, more suited to their gross taste, have been introduced; at first angels; but at length, by a natural process, the chief place in their religious affections has become occupied by the Virgin Mary, and other saints of inferior character, who have received much greater abundance of these marks of devotion and homage than the Supreme Being himself. So impossible is it for the church of Rome, to purge itself from the charge of that idolatry which the Scriptures most severely denounce. Were there no other reason to deter persons from the communion of that church, her profane tampering with the very elements of devotion, and poisoning the first principles of religion, were alone sufficient to inspire all true christians with the utmost abhorrence. For, the same authority which forbids the transfer of worship from a right to a wrong object, also stigmatizes all deviation from the prescribed standard, in the manner of worshipping the Divine Being himself. Could we see nothing of a tendency to lead on to greater abominations in this "chamber of imagery," till it terminate in hero and idol worship, nay, in the worship of wood and stone, it is expressly forbidden; and this prohibition alone is sufficient to stamp it with the character of impiety.

III. That God is a spirit, and not flesh, is inseparably connected with his immensity and omnipresence, or the capacity of being present in all parts of his creation.

Omnipresence is an attribute which both reason and scripture teach us to ascribe to the Deity, and which he repeatedly assumes to himself: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."* "Whither," says the Psalmist, "shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."† We are taught to believe that the essence of the Divine Being is diffused over all space—that there is not an atom existing in its boundless extent which he does not fill with his presence and energy. Were his nature material this could not be, for the following reasons:—

1. It is necessary that matter should have some *figure*, without which we cannot even conceive it to exist, whether we regard it as a whole, and include the aggregate of material substances, or look at the several portions of which that aggregate consists, and contemplate its parts as having a separate existence. Figure seems essential to the conception of all matter; but that which has any assignable figure must be circumscribed within a certain outline; there must, then, be some point of space where it terminates, and where vacuity begins, consequently it must be limited. To conceive, therefore, of the Divine Being as material, would be to involve ourselves in absurdity; for matter infinitely extended implies a contradiction, by uniting two opposite and irreconcilable suppositions.

2. If matter were unlimited there would be no possi-

* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. † Ps. cxxxix. 7—12.

bility of motion; but this is a supposition contrary to fact and experience; for we perceive that motion every where exists. It is obvious that there could be no motion unless there were some space not previously occupied by body. In a perfect plenum, motion would be impossible, because there would be no possibility of conceiving that space into which the first moving body might pass.

3. If the Divine Being were material, it would be impossible that he should be infinite in his essence, fill all space, penetrate all substances, pervade all minds; because, on that supposition, he would render impossible the co-existence of created beings. We cannot conceive of two portions of matter occupying the same part of space. Were the Deity therefore material, he must exclude all other matter from the space he occupies; and since he is infinite, that exclusion must be perfect and entire: but this, being contrary to physical fact, is certainly contrary to intellectual truth. Whereas God, being a spirit, subsists in a totally different manner from all material substances; his manner of existence being altogether peculiar to himself, and such as we cannot adequately conceive. It follows, however, that any material substance and the Divine Being are capable of being present in the same place, at the same time, without destroying each other's properties and attributes. Such a Being also can be equally present at one and the same moment in innumerable myriads of worlds, and to all parts of the universe . . . .

* * * * * *

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The Infinite Spirit is present with every part of his creation, as intimately as the soul of man is present throughout all the parts of that corporeal substance which it animates and sustains. His essence is diffused over all space. He is intimately present with all his creatures, as intimately as they are to themselves; is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts of all intelligent beings; unites himself with the very constitution of their nature. They exist within the grasp

of his omnipotence, within the perpetual comprehension of his presence, within the sphere of his energy, and the light of his countenance. "In him they live, and move, and have their being." We frequently speak of God dwelling in the world, by the manifestations of his power and providence; but it may with equal truth be said, that the world dwells in God; all creatures being surrounded by his presence, and enclosed in his essence. We cannot for a moment conceive of such a being as separated from any part of the universe, or point of space: all creatures, spiritual and material, subsist in Him who, maintaining his own separate existence distinct from the external world, exercises absolute universal dominion over all the beings he has formed. This particular property of his nature, this peculiar mode of his existence, renders him capable of being the all-comprehending God, of holding in his own hand all the innumerable creatures he has formed.

IV. Because God is a spirit, and not flesh, he is possessed of infinite wisdom and intelligence.

This seems to be a necessary property of that Being, who, himself unbounded and filling all things, must be present to all his creatures at all times, with the same plenitude of perfection as at the very instant of their creation. We cannot conceive for a moment of any interval betwixt him and them, which might exclude them from his view. They must ever be in immediate contact with him, and the objects of his perpetual vision. He is not obliged to change his place in order to observe and take cognizance of them. This presence of God with his creatures being infinite and eternal, his infinite acquaintance with them seems to be a necessary consequence. He that formed all things does not quit any portion of his vast empire when he retires to the "high and secret place of his sanctuary." He needs not to vary his position towards his creatures, in order to obtain a more advantageous situation, or catch the benefit of changing lights, for the purpose of making a more accurate scrutiny of any of them. Every one is as much within his survey at one moment as at another; he is

continually present to them, with the same plenitude of power as that which was exerted in their formation out of nothing. Every movement, both of spirit and matter, is performed "in him," and must therefore be immediately within his notice. It is impossible that any thing should elude or escape the light of his countenance, or that any darkness should cover, from his view, those beings which he has created. Hence, he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts of all hearts, and the secret springs of all the actions of his rational, intelligent creatures. We are obliged to judge of men's character by their actions; he judges of their actions by their motives: we can only trace the streams, and by them judge of the fountain whence they proceed; he penetrates the hidden spring and source: we form a few conjectures of what is passing in man, by the outward exhibitions of his conduct; he, in consequence of the knowledge he possesses of the very constitution of those beings who have been called into existence by his divine power, detects at once the secret springs of all their actions.—"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart." He qualifies all our actions by immediate attention to the causes whence they proceed: the *motive* is that which determines the action in his sight, and his judgement is always according to truth. "By him actions are weighed." While we are continually liable to be mistaken, and our judgements and censures, often rash and misplaced, are always uncertain; his eye pierces the thickest shades of darkness. The gloom of midnight and the splendour of noon are only distinctions with respect to us; in regard to him, there is no difference: "With him the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him." There can be no folly therefore so great as for a creature to attempt to conceal himself from the inspection and scrutiny of his Maker. He is within us: "in him we live, and move, and have our being." We need no other proof that he knows the secrets of the heart, than that he is present with its most hidden recesses. Hence, in the Psalm already referred to, the

Psalmist infers his infinite cognizance of his creatures, from the fact of his incessant and intimate presence with them. The infinite knowledge which God has of his works, is indeed inseparably connected with this part of his character. As the Infinite Spirit—the great Father of spirits—he is the source of all the intelligence and wisdom which exist in created spirits. He must be perfectly acquainted with all the operations and results of all other minds, since he has constituted them, and they are entirely the effect of his own intelligence and wisdom. When the heathen world lost sight of the spirituality of God, they also lost sight of his omniscience; and, after gradually sinking lower in proportion as they receded farther from that view of his character, their notions of him became at length so debased, that they invested him with a corporeal form. The spirituality of the divine nature, having been attested by the Saviour, and made one of the principles of his religion, has raised the conceptions of the human mind far beyond what the greatest philosophers could previously attain; and enabled children to surpass, in both spiritual and intellectual illumination, the sages of pagan antiquity.

* * * * * *

V. The doctrine of the spirituality of the divine nature establishes a most intimate relation between him and all his intelligent creatures: it becomes a bond of the most subtile union between himself and the intellectual part of the creation.

He stands in close and intimate relation to all creatures: their dependence on him is absolute, their subjection to him constant and incessant; but in a special manner is he the Father of spirits. The relation between father and child is very intimate; but that between God and man is much more so. An earthly parent is but the instrument; God is the author of our existence: one is the father of the flesh; the other of the spirit. In proportion as the spirit is the most important part of human nature, this relation which we sustain to God is most essential, interesting, and extensive. The body connects us with the material universe around us; the

soul connects us immediately with the Deity. At death, the body returns to the earth, its native element; "the spirit returns to God that gave it." The body has a tendency to separate us from God, by the dissimilarity of its nature; the soul, on the contrary, unites us again to him, by means of those principles and faculties which, though infinitely inferior, are of a character congenial with his own. The body is the production of God, the soul is his image. . . . . .

To estrange ourselves from God is therefore to be guilty of a new and most enormous kind of offence: it is forgetting our proper parent, the author of our being, the very source of our existence. To love him, to seek union with him in the closest manner possible, is to return to our proper original—to seek Him from whom all our powers are derived, and by whom alone they can be sustained in time, and must be consummated and completed in eternity. If you were to see a person manifest no desire for the presence of an earthly parent, you would be shocked at the spectacle, and would be ready to represent him as a prodigy of ingratitude. How much more would it affect a well-constituted mind to behold a creature seeking estrangement from his Heavenly Parent—living in forgetfulness of Him. This would appear matter of the greatest astonishment, were men to withdraw themselves from sensible objects, and retire into their own minds, for the purpose of serious reflection. The prophet calls on heaven and earth to sympathize with him in this emotion: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."*

* * * * *

VI. The spirituality of the divine nature renders him capable of the exalted prerogative of being the satisfying portion, the supreme good, of all intelligent beings.

It is in consequence of being a spirit, that he is properly fitted to be the Supreme Good; not merely the

* Isaiah i. 2.

dispenser of those outward benefits which gratify the corporeal appetites, and sustain our transitory state in this world; not only the author, but the immediate source, the very element of our happiness—in consequence of those properties of his nature which are congenial with our own. Many are willing to acknowledge their dependence on the power and providence of God for those good things, the possession of which the world calls happiness, such as riches, honours, pleasures; they expect to be made happy by means of his influence over inferior creatures, exerted in putting things in a train for that purpose. But the devout man ascends to God himself, as the source and spring of happiness, in the contemplation of whom, and in whose friendship and love, consists eternal life: he regards him as the highest good, the source of felicity to the intelligent universe, the very principle of good. The Psalmist recognized the Divine Being under this character, and he has been so recognized by the faithful in every age and every nation; "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."* We find holy men casting their eyes round upon all that is in heaven and on earth . . . . then collecting all into one great aggregate, and solemnly relinquishing the whole, trampling it in the dust, in order to ascend to God, and rest in his love. "Whom," says the Psalmist, "have I in heaven but *thee*, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. My soul thirsteth for God, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, this, this is life eternal. The Divine Being not only sustains towards us the character of a governor, ruling our wills by his holy law, but is also the chief object of our affections; and we never know him aright till we feel thus towards him; till we obey him from the heart, perceiving in him

* Lam. iii. 24, 25. Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

that which is suited to the nature of our immortal minds, and resting in him as our eternal and unchanging portion. If you do not ascend as high as this, you will never find any rest for your soul, you will wander through eternity restless and unsatisfied: "The height will say, It is not in me; and the depth, It is not in me;" and every voice will answer us with scorn unless we listen to that which now issues from the secret presence of the Almighty: "Acquaint thyself with *me*, and be at peace." All that we can derive from creatures is partial, scanty, limited, and precarious; and even that is the effect of his power, the fruit of his munificence: but with Him is the fountain of life, "in his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." He manifests himself to his people, as he does not to the world. The communion they enjoy with the Father of their spirits, forms an essential part of the experience of all real christians. How intimately this is connected with the spirituality of the divine nature will appear, if you consider a few things which naturally arise from a view of the present subject.

1. That which constitutes the felicity of the mind must be something out of it. Whoever retires into his own mind for happiness, will soon find himself miserable; he will feel imprisoned till he is permitted to go forth and unite himself in affection and confidence to something out of himself. Hence those who are most insulated, and cut off from all contact with others, are styled, by way of distinction, *misers*, and are truly the most miserable of men. There cannot be a greater picture of abject wretchedness, than a man, entirely confined to himself, possessing none of those sensibilities which attach mind to mind, and heart to heart—a stranger to that reciprocation of feeling and affection between kindred minds, which is the very balm of life. But where shall we find, out of ourselves, that which is not, like ourselves, changing, uncertain, and liable to decay, except in God, the Eternal Spirit, who, being essentially incorruptible and immortal, is qualified to be the everlasting, inexhaustible spring of satisfaction to all

his intelligent creatures? In fellowship with him may be enjoyed to the uttermost all that is tender and delightful in the emotions which friendship is adapted to inspire, at the same time that in the contemplation of all those great and excellent qualities which elevate and dignify his character, may be awakened the awe which vastness and power are fitted to excite; and both together may well be supposed capable of filling the mind with a calm and peaceful rapture, to eternity. If the friendship of a fellow-creature be capable of affording such exquisite delight, how divine a delectation must flow from union of heart with the Deity!

2. He who can always confer happiness on another being must be superior to that being. To be the source of happiness is the highest prerogative, the greatest preeminence, that one being can possess over another; it is, in fact, to be his God. It is plain that we must look higher than ourselves, and trust to the intervention of a power greatly superior to our own, for the source and perpetuity of our happiness. Hence the Psalmist prays: "When my heart is overwhelmed within me, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." The Divine Being possesses this qualification in the highest degree; he is the Infinite Spirit;—to him alone it belongs to say to any created being, "I will be thy God." . . . . . He only is capable of bestowing and assuring true, permanent, unchanging felicity, at all periods, and through all duration; of doing, in short, "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The earth in this respect with all its riches is indigent; even the splendour of immortality is dark, as to any power capable of guiding man to happiness, independently of the Great Eternal. It belongs to him as the Father of Spirits; for he alone possesses that power and dominion over all beings which is necessary in order to render him the portion and happiness of his people.

3. That in which the happiness of a rational and mental creature consists must be congenial to the nature of that creature. The body may be made happy by cor-

poreal objects, adapted to gratify its senses; mind can never be made happy except by mental objects. It rejects with contempt and disdain all sensible delights as its portion. The understanding must be satisfied with the light of truth, or we cannot, as rational creatures, be free from disquietude; the affections must be satisfied in the lovely qualities of character, before the heart can find rest. Where these requisites are wanting, men often languish in the midst of plenty; though surrounded by the means of enjoyment, cast a lingering, despairing view around; and sometimes feel disposed to envy those inferior creatures which are placed beneath the level of rationality. But the mental and spiritual excellencies and perfections requisite to constitute the adequate portion of mental and spiritual beings, can only be found in God, who must therefore be the proper good of a thinking creature.

4. That which forms the principle of our felicity must be something that is capable of communicating itself to us. Creatures solely material are entirely incapable of doing this. Sensual pleasures can never reach our interior nature: they are not sufficiently subtile to constitute the source of delight to the mind; they touch only the grosser elements of our susceptibility, and do not penetrate sufficiently deep to be the proper basis of our enjoyment. But God, as he is a spirit, is capable of communicating himself to the spirits of his rational creatures. Spirit naturally comes into contact with spirit; and this communication of himself is infinitely easy to the Divine Being. He can manifest himself to the hearts of his people, disclose the glory of his name to them more and more, open perpetually fresh views of his character, give them fresh sensations of ineffable delight in the contemplation of his excellence, lead them forward from one department of his perfections to another, and make the whole creation itself speak forth his praises. Thus may he accumulate the materials of ceaseless rapture to eternity; elevating his worshippers perpetually in adoration, at the same time that he lays them lower in prostration before him. Hence we are taught in the

Scriptures to believe that these communications and disclosures of himself by the Deity will constitute the felicity of heaven—this intimate union between the hearts of his creatures and his own essential character, there described as the vision of God, or the intuitive knowledge of him as a spirit, will form the principal ingredient of future happiness. Our Saviour represents himself as the source of this happiness; "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."* The apostle Paul, also, speaking of the perfection of the happiness of heaven, describes it as resulting from the immediate sight of the Divine glory. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face; now I know in part, then shall I know even as also I am known."

Even while they continue on earth, it is the privilege of the faithful to enjoy that union and alliance with the Father of spirits, through his Son, by virtue of which they become one spirit with him. There are favoured seasons, when filled, even to overflowing, with a sense of his love, the wilderness appears to them more beautiful than the peopled city. At such seasons, though all the evils that afflict the flesh may attempt to assail the immortal mind, he can be so present to the heart, and impart to the soul such ecstasies of enjoyment, as will more than overpower the violence of pain, and even prevail over the agonies of death.

We now proceed to a brief practical improvement of the subject before us:—

Let us, in contemplating the Divine Being, endeavour to raise ourselves above the association of our minds with what is sensible, visible, and corporeal, and retire within our own nature; not for the purpose of seeking happiness there, but that we may feel our necessity of God, and perceive the demand which the highest powers of our nature make for such a Being, and the impossibility of their finding rest but in his knowledge, obedi-

* John xvii. 24.

ence, and love. The natural effect of communion with ourselves is to convince us of our own emptiness and nothingness, at the same time that it indicates our native grandeur, inasmuch as there is nothing that can constitute our rational portion but God. In your calmest moments, my brethren, you will find that you possess an understanding capable of contemplating God, and that He only can be an adequate object to engage and employ that understanding, because he is the only being capable of affording to you light, happiness, and life, through a boundless eternity. You possess a conscience, which gives a moral character to all your actions, tinctures with an evil of its own peculiar kind (the evil of guilt) whatever it condemns, and invests with an attribute of moral beauty and rectitude whatever it approves:—whence you will perceive that you never can be happy till conscience is on your side, till the character of your actions and thoughts is such as will bear the review of that inward monitor. To produce this effect is to harmonize a man with his own conscience—to bring him to be at peace with himself, because at peace with God—to place him on a moral centre, where he can rest self-poised amidst all the fluctuations of the external world. You will find within you a susceptibility which recoils from pain and thirsts for pleasures; not merely those that are corporeal in their nature, but also mental and intellectual, such as those which we taste in friendship, and in the contemplation of virtue and truth. Hence you will perceive that you can never be truly and eternally happy till these affections have an adequate object; and that never will be found except in the supreme, eternal, original Spirit. He alone can so communicate himself to you, and give you such a knowledge of his character, and such a sense of his friendship, as will render you in a great measure independent of all earthly objects. You will perceive that he is fitted to be himself the sole and exclusive object of all these powers; you will see the propriety and beauty of that exclamation—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee."

Since God is a spirit, and we are principally distinguished by possessing a rational and immortal nature, there must be an everlasting connexion established between him and us,—either favourable or injurious, of reward or punishment, of mercy or justice,—on which will depend our destiny for ever. There must be a meeting of all finite spirits in the presence of the infinite, original Spirit, when an account must be given to God of "the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil." Your happiness must eternally consist in the favour of that Being to whom you are perpetually responsible for all the sentiments of your heart, and all the actions of your life. If you die in a state of disobedience, impenitence, and alienation from God, you will incur the doom denounced against those whom our Saviour threatened that if they believed not in him, but rejected his mission and authority, they should die in their sins. A more awful denunciation, who can conceive?—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; and whither I go, ye cannot come."

The consequence will be, that the Being whom you have neglected and forgotten will be the constant and eternal source of your misery. You will sink under his frown; separation from him will be the great cause of your anguish; you will be vessels of his wrath; you will have fitted yourselves, by contempt of the supreme authority, and alienation from the supreme good, to be for ever in a state of wretchedness, because of separation from Him who is "the fountain of living water."

Since God is a spirit, and we are unable to raise ourselves so high as to attain the favour and friendship of such a Being, whose entirely spiritual nature is so subtile that it eludes our unassisted conceptions;—in order that the worship of the true God may be adapted to become the universal religion, Jesus Christ has come down to earth, has assumed human nature, embodied the attributes of God in an incarnate form, and thus taught us the character of the Deity in his own actions. We know the principles of the divine conduct in the government of the world, by the conduct and character of our

blessed Saviour in his life. He is "the image of the invisible God," the only representation of Deity: "He that hath seen me," said he, "hath seen the Father." The design of his coming into this world was to bring back apostate creatures to his Father; "to make reconciliation for iniquity," by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; and thus to remove all those impediments which spring from the character of God to acceptance in his sight, and to restore them to the enjoyment of his eternal favour. He gave himself a sacrifice on the altar of justice, that a free passage might be opened to the favour of his heavenly Father, without any impeachment of the Divine character; "that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

What movements are in your minds, my brethren, with respect to this great object, at this time? Are your thoughts stationary, or are they moving in a right or a wrong direction? Are you under the guidance of Christ, seeking increased acquaintance with him, aspiring after higher degrees of resemblance to him, fixing your hopes more firmly upon his promises? Then all things will be favourable to you; "the world, or life, or death, things present, or things to come,—all are yours." You have obeyed from the heart the call of the gospel; you have forsaken the world; have become dead to it before you are called to leave it; and have laid up treasure in heaven, having trusted your souls to the hands of the Divine Redeemer; "you know whom you have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him until that day." But if your minds are engaged in a contrary direction; if you are seeking happiness in the things of this world, living in the neglect of God, never raising your thoughts to the contemplation of the Supreme Good,—if, having rejected the great salvation, you are content to lie under the weight of unacknowledged, and therefore unpardoned, guilt,—yet bear with me while I remind you that you must have a meeting with God; you must see the face of that Divine Being whose authority you have spurned, and feel the anger of that Divine Redeemer whom you

have rejected. You will, if you persist in this course, hear him pronounce the fearful sentence, "Those mine enemies, that would not have me to reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me:" "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Blessed be God, there are those now present who are placing their affections habitually on the great Supreme, and uniting themselves, more and more closely, to him by faith in the Son of God. Let such persons rejoice in the prospects before them. The interruptions which arise from your corporeal state will speedily terminate; the flesh shall then no longer lust against the spirit, nor the spirit against the flesh; but you will "do the things that you would." You have preferred the interests of the mind to those of the body; the service of Jesus Christ, and the prospects of eternity, to all sublunary good. You are approaching nearer and nearer to the Chief Good; you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and you shall certainly be satisfied. God approves your choice, and will assist your infirmities; "he will strengthen you with all might by his Spirit in your inner man;" will "work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure;" and enable you to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

"They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Let us make continual progress in christian virtue. Every act of sin has a tendency to misery. Every effort to subdue corruption, and to live to the will of God, is, on the contrary, a seed which, by God's grace, will bring forth fruit to everlasting life. By patient continuance in well-doing, let us seek for glory, honour, and immortality; for to such God will assuredly recompense eternal life: but to those that are disobedient, and do not obey the truth, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." "On the wicked he will rain fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."*

* Rom. ii. 7—9; Ps. xi. 6.

II.

THE GLORY OF GOD IN CONCEALING.

PROVERBS XXV. 2.—*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.**

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER, 1826.]

IT is difficult to say whether the glory of God appears more in what he displays, or in what he conceals, of his operations and designs. Were he to conceal every thing from our view, it would be impossible that any glory could result to him from the sentiments and actions of his creatures. From entire ignorance nothing could arise, no medium of intercourse could be established between the creature and the Creator. In the total absence of the knowledge of God, religion must be totally excluded and unknown. But it is by a partial communication of himself, which the Divine Being might, if he pleased, in various degrees extend and increase beyond the present measure, that he has in the highest degree consulted his honour and manifested his wisdom. If there were no light, we should sink into a state of irreligious doubt and despair; if there were no darkness, we should be in danger of losing that reverential sense of his infinite majesty so essential to religion, and of impiously supposing that the Almighty is such an one as ourselves. But a temperature of mingled light and obscurity, a combination of discovery and concealment, is calculated to produce the most suitable impressions of the divine excellence on the minds of fallen creatures. When God was pleased to favour his ancient people with a supernatural display of his presence, by a visible symbol, during their journey through the wilderness, it wore this twofold aspect; it was a pillar of cloud and of fire, dark in the day-time and luminous in the night; and when he conducted them through the Red Sea, he turned the bright side of the cloud towards the camp of

* From the Notes of Joshua Wilson, Esq.

Israel, and the gloomy side towards the Egyptians by whom they were pursued.*

When he descended on Mount Sinai, the token of his presence was a mass of thick and dark clouds, penetrated at intervals by flashes of lightning. On the third day, in the morning, we are informed, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; and, it is added, "the mount was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace." When Solomon had finished his temple, the manifestation which the Deity made of himself, in taking possession of it and consecrating it to his service, was of the same character. No sooner had the priests gone out of the holy place, than the cloud filled the house of the Lord; and "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." The first indication of the divine presence was the overspreading of thick darkness, which afterwards subsided, and unfolded itself gradually, till it terminated in an insufferable splendour. Upon observing this, Solomon, at the commencement of his celebrated prayer, used these words: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness."† If God dwells in light inaccessible, he equally makes darkness his dwelling-place,—"his pavilion dark waters and thick clouds of the sky." "Clouds and darkness," says David, "are round about him; righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne." In this view of the character and dispensations of the Almighty, the Psalmist probably alludes to those sensible indications of his presence which are recorded in his ancient oracles.

At our Saviour's transfiguration, the three disciples retained their composure until *the cloud* appeared; for they knew that to be the symbol of the immediate presence of the Deity. "*They feared*," we are told, "*when they entered into the cloud;*" and it was thence the voice proceeded, saying, "*This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.*"

* Exod. xiv. 19, 20. † 1 Kings viii. 12.

These representations are in perfect harmony with the doctrine of the passage under our present consideration, in which the wisest of men, speaking by inspiration, informs us that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing." He does it with a design to promote his glory, being by necessity his own ultimate and final end.

There are two observations naturally suggested by these words:—

I. The Divine Being is accustomed to conceal much.

II. In this he acts in a manner worthy of himself, and suited to display his glory.

I. We shall specify some of the instances in which God conceals things.

1. In relation to his own nature and the manner of his existence.

His essence is altogether hidden from the most profound investigation, the most laborious research, the most subtile penetration, of his creatures. With respect to this, it may be said, "Who by searching can find out God; who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" We know that he possesses certain attributes, which we distinguish by different names drawn from analagous excellencies among men, exclusive of all limit or imperfection found in human nature. We ascribe to him every idea of virtue and spiritual beauty, exalted to infinite perfection. But how the Divine Being himself exists in an essential and eternal nature of his own, without beginning as well as without end,—how he can be present at the same moment in every point of illimitable space, without excluding any one of his creatures from the room it occupies,—how, unseen, unfelt by all, he can maintain a pervading and intimate acquaintance and contact with all parts and all portions of the universe,—how he can be at once all eye, all ear, all presence, all energy, yet interfere with none of the perceptions and actions of his creatures,—this is what equally baffles the mightiest and the meanest intellect; this is the great mystery of the universe, which is at once the most certain and the most incomprehensible of all things; —a truth at once enveloped in a flood of light and an abyss of darkness. Inexplicable itself, it explains all besides: it casts a clearness on every question, accounts for every phenomenon, solves every problem, illuminates every depth, and renders the whole mystery of existence as perfectly simple as it is otherwise perfectly unintelligible, while itself *alone* remains in impenetrable obscurity! After displacing every other difficulty, it remains the greatest of all, in solitary, insurmountable, unapproachable grandeur! So truly "clouds and darkness are round about him." "He maketh darkness his secret habitation; his pavilion to cover him, thick clouds."

His perfections are impressed on the works of nature; but in such a manner that we learn them only by inference. We ascend from effects to causes; from the marks of contrivance and design, to the necessary existence of an Almighty Contriver. But what sort of being he is, and what is the nature of his contact with his creatures, must, in the present state at least, remain an unfathomable mystery. We are utterly at a loss in all such speculations; yet this affords no diminution of the motives of piety. Our belief in the being of a God is the belief of a profound mystery. The very idea of such a Being would appear incredible were it not that it is necessary, because the greatest absurdities would flow from supposing the contrary. Nothing can be accounted for unless we admit the existence of a causeless Cause—a presiding Governor of the universe. We are compelled therefore to choose the less difficulty of the two; or rather, to choose difficulty instead of impossibility, mystery instead of absurdity: and hence we repose on this grand truth.

2. The Divine Being observes the same method of concealment, in a great variety of respects, with regard to the structure and constitution of his *works*. The scenes of nature lie open to our view; they solicit our senses, and are adapted to impress themselves in a most lively manner upon our minds. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." We cannot look around us without beholding,

not only the works themselves, but evident traces of that matchless wisdom, power, and goodness, whence they sprang. Still, the mysteries of nature, with regard to the *essences* of things, and indeed to a multitude of subtile *operations*, are kept in a kind of sacred reserve, and elude the utmost efforts of philosophy to surprise them in their concealments and bring them to light. While Science goes on from step to step in the march of her discoveries, it seems as if her grandest result was the conviction how much remains undiscovered; and, while nations in a ruder state of science have been ready to repose on their ignorance and error, or to confound familiarity with knowledge, the most enlightened of men have always been the first to perceive and acknowledge the remaining obscurity which hung around them; just as, in the night, the farther a light extends, the wider the surrounding sphere of darkness appears. Hence it has always been observed, that the most profound inquirers into nature have been the most modest and humble. So convinced was Socrates, the chief luminary of the ancient world, of the great obscurity attending all such inquiries, that he abandoned the search of nature, and confined his disquisitions to moral questions, and rules for the conduct of life. The same illustrious man declared, that he knew no reason why the oracle of Delphi pronounced him to be the wisest of men, except it was that, being conscious of his ignorance, he was willing to confess that he knew nothing. Newton, the greatest philosopher whom the modern world has known, declared, speaking of a distinguished contemporary from whose genius he augured vast discoveries, but who died in early life, (the celebrated Cotes,) "If that young man had lived, we should have known something." In so modest a manner did he advert to his own imperfect knowledge of that science with which he had attained such prodigious acquaintance as to have become the pride and wonder of the world! Those that have devoted themselves to an investigation of the laws of nature, find, in a great variety of the most common productions, sufficient to engage their inquiries and employ

their faculties: they perceive that the meanest work of God is inexhaustible;—contains secrets which the wisdom of man will never be able to penetrate. They are only some of the superficial appearances and sensible properties with which we are familiar. Substances and essences we cannot reach. The secret laws which regulate the operations of nature we cannot unveil. Indeed, we have reason to believe that the most enlarged understanding must, in a very short time, resolve its inquiries into the will of God as the ultimate reason. Thus, one of the best effects of intellectual cultivation, and the acquisition of knowledge, is to restore the mind to that state of natural simplicity and surprise in which every thing above, beneath, and around us, appears replete with mystery, and excites those emotions of freshness and astonishment with which the scenes of nature are contemplated during the season of childhood.

3. God is accustomed to conceal much in the dispensations of his providence. The dispensations of the divine providence are that series of actions which the Divine Being is continually carrying on in the government of the world which he has made. This, though it presents many evident marks of wisdom and design, is also eminently endowed with the property of obscurity. "*God is known by the judgements which he executeth.*" The established order of providence in this world makes manifest to every serious and reflecting mind, that, "*there is verily a God that judgeth in the earth.*" There exists such a decided connexion between well-doing and happiness on the one hand, and between wickedness and misery on the other, as sufficiently to show, even independently of revelation, that the Divine Being is the patron of rectitude and the enemy of vice. Yet, while there is a prevailing tendency in virtue to promote happiness, this tendency is not always carried into actual effect. The natural course of things is frequently interrupted and suspended by incidental causes: so that particular exceptions are continually occurring to the ordinary rule.

There are two respects in which the Divine Being perpetually conceals the ways of his providence.

(1.) He conceals the design for which many events are permitted to take place.

There are many important circumstances and events, the reason of which will probably remain, to the end of time, altogether inscrutable: such, for instance, as the depression of the righteous; the success of fraud and violence; the frustration of the purposes of benevolence and virtue; the prevalence of persecution; the sufferings of martyrs; the limited diffusion of christianity; the extent to which idolatry has been suffered to desolate the moral world, and "the mystery of iniquity" to overspread a large portion of Christendom. The best and wisest of men have confessed themselves at a loss to interpret the design of the divine dispensations with respect to themselves and their contemporaries. Even prophets have acknowledged that their minds were for a time perplexed by the anomalies of providence: "Righteous art thou, O Lord," says Jeremiah, "yet let me talk with thee of thy judgements: Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" And David, when he reflected on the prosperity of the wicked, the unequal distribution of good and evil, and the afflictions to which the righteous were exposed, was tempted to exclaim, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain;" nor did he find any satisfaction until he went into the sanctuary of God, and there understood their end.

(2.) The Divine Being is accustomed to throw much obscurity over the future. He makes the present the scene of our duty, while he has, in a great degree, hidden futurity from our view. "We know not what shall be on the morrow;" we are ignorant of the next event that shall arise, and cannot, with all the light we can gather round us, determine what shall befall us at the next moment: we are impelled forward on the stream of time, but know not what is immediately before us. This ignorance of the future is complete with respect to the period of our own lives. Our existence this moment is

no security for its continuance the next: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." It is always a matter of awful uncertainty, when we enter on the business of the day, whether we shall close it in time or eternity; when we compose our eyes to slumber, in which world we shall open them. The future is ever in the hand of God. No man can say with confidence that any one scheme he is pursuing shall be attended with success,—any one hope or fear which he entertains be realized. Every period of our life is opening some fresh page, the contents of which no human sagacity can determine; nor is there a single event that may take place under the sun, which can be known with certainty until it be actually accomplished. God reserves the causes of events in his own hand; and all that the highest wisdom can attain is such a degree of probability as may lay a foundation for distant and uncertain conjecture. He leads nations, as well as individuals, "by the way that they know not." The scenes are shifted and changed by an invisible hand, in such a manner as clearly to prove, that the collective wisdom of mankind is no more competent to direct their way, than the solitary wisdom of individuals.

We have had a very stiking instance of this, in the change that has recently taken place in the state of this nation;* which has, not by a slow gradation, but in the course of a very few weeks, and almost as it were instantaneously fallen from the highest elevation to the lowest depression. From a state of unexampled prosperity, when we were exulting in the expectation of

* This sermon was delivered in a season of great public calamity. A supposed failure in the crops produced the alarm of famine. The year 1826 was, throughout, extremely unfavourable to trade and manufactures. The number of bankrupts in the first six months had been nearly quadruple the number in the first six months of 1825. Labourers were so inadequately employed, as to render them in great measure dependent on the contributions of the more affluent for the immediate necessaries of life. An universal "panic" prevailed among commercial men; the *average* depreciation in the value of marketable commodities exceeded 18 per cent.; and all classes were struggling with extraordinary difficulties.—Ed.

still brighter scenes, our prospect has become suddenly clouded with embarrassment, distress, and dismay. Who could anticipate that famine would thus rise out of the midst of plenty; want of subsistence, in the midst of the greatest abundance both of the natural productions of the earth and the artificial productions of human industry? Was there any one of the wise men of the world,—any one of those whose office it is to superintend the affairs of nations, and conduct them as far as finite minds can conduct them,—who formed the slightest conjecture of such a state of things? Did any of them foretell it? Had any one presented to his mind the faintest glimpse of that event which God in his providence has brought upon us? No:—the destinies of nations are entirely in *his* hand, and "he doeth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, as well as in the army of heaven." He is pleased, indeed, usually, to give us some glimpses into futurity, by establishing a certain order in the dealings of his providence with rational creatures. While this enables us to employ means which are adapted to produce certain effects, yet he so frequently frustrates the natural tendency of actions, as to convince us that the course of events is under the control of a superior power. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding." Hence, while encouragement is given to the practice of virtue, by its general tendency to promote our temporal interest and advantage, confidence in our own wisdom and prudence, in neglect of a devout acknowledgement of the hand of God, appears to be the highest presumption. "The foolishness of God" appears, on many occasions, "wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men." Individuals are sometimes defeated and ruined, even by the success of their own precautions; while, on the other hand, temerity and folly are sometimes permitted to accomplish what wisdom could not effect. Exceptions to the success of human effort are so numerous, and the variety of events on which that success depends so complicated, as continually to remind us of our absolute dependence on that unseen Being who conducts us whithersoever he will, and accomplishes the whole purpose of his mind, without *giving an account of any of his matters.*

The most important events of human life, on which our happiness greatly depends, are, for the most part, concealed from our view. Very few persons have ascertained, with any degree of accuracy, either the degree or the kind of prosperity and success with which their efforts in pursuit of human felicity have been crowned. The greatest evils which we are called to endure generally take us by surprise, and the most favourable results have been so produced as to render it apparent that they were not entirely the fruit of our own sagacity, providence, or enterprise. There is no event so interesting to us as our departure from this world,—that great change, so comprehensive that it includes every other; yet this the Divine Being usually conceals. *Man also*, says the author of this book, *knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.** Very few persons die at the precise period which their own imaginations have allotted to that event. Death overtakes most "as a thief in the night." No man is enabled to ascertain at "what hour the Son of man cometh;" and while we are kept in perpetual uncertainty respecting this event, it is the greatest vanity to boast of our foreknowledge of any other, because, when this arrives, our interest in the present world ceases. All that is done under the sun, all the joys and sorrows, successes and disappointments, which take place among men, are then, in regard to us, events that occur in another world. It is true, indeed, that where the bulk of mankind, or great multitudes are concerned, the calculation of chances respecting their average continuance on earth may be easy and exact: errors on one side are corrected and balanced by those on the opposite; the vibrations of the

* Eccles. ix. 12.

pendulum being equivalent to its remaining stationary But, with individuals, the case is altogether different; all inferences in reference to the termination of individual life are vain. No person, therefore, can justify himself in deferring till to-morrow his preparation for that eternal world which may be the first thing that presents itself to his awaking faculties.

4. The Divine Being is pleased to conceal much in the economy of grace and redemption. In the manifestations of his will, even in that dispensation which is intended to afford some knowledge of himself, and of his gracious purposes and designs to the children of men, he maintains the same character, and mingles, in almost equal proportions, obscurity and brightness. Revelation, indeed, by its very nature, is intended to impart information. We are taught in Scripture, in the New Testament especially, many of the "deep things of God;" and we are under unspeakable obligations for that "*dayspring from on high which has visited us*, to guide our feet into the way of peace, and give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." Yet the revelation contained in the Scriptures extends only to *facts*, not to the theory of those facts, or their original causes. The most important truths are communicated in a dogmatic, not a theoretic, manner. We are taught, on the testimony of Him that cannot lie, insulated facts which we cannot connect with those reasons with which they are undoubtedly connected in the divine mind. They rest solely on the basis of divine authority; and we are left as much in the dark with respect to the mode of their existence as if they were not revealed. He has given us reason to believe that the Godhead subsists in three persons; distinct acts of personal agency being ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while worship and adoration are claimed for them separately: but the theory of this is utterly beyond our comprehension; nor does it appear to be any part of the intention of scripture to put us in possession of that theory. Those who have ventured to approach too near this inaccessible light, though with honest and sincere intentions, have, for the most part, by

attempting to explain it, involved the subject in deeper obscurity, and "darkened counsel by words without knowledge."

We are expressly informed that "the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among men." There was a mysterious and inconceivable union betwixt the divine nature of the Son of God, who was "the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person," before the world began, and the man Christ Jesus. But when we attempt to develope this mystery, and inquire how this union was effected and maintained without the two natures being identified, or their respective properties being confounded, we are utterly at a loss. We affirm nothing more than the matter of fact, we only put into other words the express testimony of the inspired writers, without pretending to unfold the mystery of his person, who was Immanuel, God with us. Surely, if we cannot discover how the Divine Being *made* man, it must be far beyond our faculties to comprehend how the Creator of the world *became* a partaker of the nature he had made. This, which has been styled the hypostatical union,—in consequence of which, the blood shed upon the cross, being the blood of God's own Son, possesses that marvellous efficacy, by virtue of which it cleanses from all sin,—will probably for ever remain an impenetrable secret. *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.* We are far from suppressing our conviction that this is a great mystery; we rejoice, on the contrary, in its incomprehensibility; we delight to lose ourselves in the impenetrable shades which invest the subject, because in the darkness and cloud which envelope it God dwells. It is the greatness which forms the mystery of the fact,—the matchless love and condescension constitute the very nucleus of the difficulty. It could only be brought within the sphere of our comprehension by a contraction of its vast dimensions, by a depression of its native grandeur. A prostration of it to the level of our feeble capacities would only render it incapable of being the magnet of souls, the attraction of

hearts, the wonder of the universe. The effect of this great fact on every one who has sufficient humility to believe the word of God, is not at all diminished by its mysterious grandeur. On the contrary, the fact itself is replete with moral influence and practical effect. Could the whole theory of the incarnation be laid open to our view, no additional force would be given to those motives to fervent gratitude and devotedness to the service of our Redeemer, which the mere fact is adapted to inspire. The practical influence is not at all impaired, but rather heightened, by the speculative difficulties which attend it, because these result merely from its ineffable grandeur. The same may be said with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. The distinct parts assigned to the three divine persons exhibit the beautiful harmony of the plan of redemption; the Father sending his Son, the Son executing his Father's will, the Holy Spirit sanctifying the people of God by dwelling in their hearts. These truths are not less practical, on account of the mystery which invests the subject. We are as able to adore the grace of the Father, the love of the Son, the communion of the Holy Spirit,—to value the distinct agency of the several persons, in the work of our salvation, as if we could clearly perceive the theory of this unspeakable mystery.

With regard to the doctrine of the atonement, we are taught all that is necessary for us to know; that the blood of Jesus Christ is the price of our redemption, and that it was infinitely worthy of God, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." We can perceive, in some degree, its tendency to advance and maintain the honour of God, as Moral Governor of the world. But many questions may be proposed, with respect to the extent of its efficacy, which our reason cannot penetrate. What connexion this great sacrifice may have with the happiness, what influence on the destiny, of beings of a higher order, we have no distinct and satisfactory knowledge, though the Scriptures give some faint intimation

of the fact; but this affords no objection to the testimony they contain, that "for us *men*, and for *our* salvation," the Son of God became incarnate, suffered, and died. It is worthy of the reserve of Infinite Majesty, to give us very brief hints with respect to the influence of these great facts on the innocent and holy part of the creation, to the utmost extent of his dominions.

Again: the operation of the Spirit of God in regeneration and sanctification we acknowledge to be highly mysterious: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." All christians, indeed, know by experience the influence of the Spirit; but what is that mysterious principle, styled grace—how it connects itself with the human mind— where its operations cease, and the operations of the human faculties begin—are questions which probably the wisest of men can no more unfold, than the weakest and most ignorant: they are very far beyond the comprehension of the human understanding. But is it, on this account, less our duty to implore that sacred influence? If it be necessary, as the antidote of our depravity, "if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit only is Spirit," and, consequently, "except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit."—of the Spirit operating as water, by cleansing and sanctifying the soul—"he cannot see the kingdom of God;" is his obligation to seek it less, because he cannot explore this mystery? Is the folly of neglecting it more venial, because he cannot penetrate the speculative depths of this doctrine? If any one feels by happy experience that power, by which those who were "dead in trespasses and sins are quickened, raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus;" if he feels that "all old things are passed away, and all things become new" within him; that he is braced by a new energy, animated by a new life, expatiates in the world to come as if it were his own; is less gratitude due for these mighty operations, because he

cannot detect and analyse the power by which they have been wrought, or explain the philosophy of divine influence?

These observations may be applied to all the other mysterious facts of christianity, either past or future. The resurrection of the dead must be admitted to be a great mystery, which nothing but the occurrence of the fact can unfold. The apostle puts this question into the mouth of an infidel: "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" which he answers in a very unceremonious manner: "Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." The glorious prospect opened by this doctrine is not less animating because it surpasses our comprehension: on the contrary, its profundity only serves to increase our astonishment, and enhance our gratitude. The apostle, in his apology before Felix, resolves the whole into an immediate exertion of divine power: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God *should raise the dead?*" If, indeed, the gospel professed to teach the theory of the fact, it would be a just objection, that this was beyond the grasp of our faculties. If, on the contrary, it merely reveal *facts*, and those facts have immediate practical bearings on the hearts and lives of those who receive them, all objections on account of their mysteriousness are futile, because they proceed on the supposition that God intended to develope the whole mystery, whereas he discovers only so much as may be adapted to rectify the conscience and purify the heart.

II. I shall now attempt to show how the Divine Being promotes his glory, by such a temperature of light and shade as that which distinguishes all his discoveries of himself, and his dispensations towards his creatures.

1. The concealment which he has thrown in these various respects over his ways, works, and word, tends to glorify him, as it is, in part, the necessary consequence of

his infinite superiority to all finite beings in wisdom and understanding,—the inevitable result of his being God. His wisdom is that which belongs to him as the Fountain of wisdom, the Father of lights, the Source of all knowledge. His purposes and designs cannot, therefore, be adequately scanned by the wisdom of men, from whom he must necessarily conceal more than he reveals. A child is not at once able to comprehend the reasons of his father, in imposing those restraints and privations which are a necessary part of parental discipline. It is only by degrees that his feeble capacity can be made to penetrate the secret of his education. If this be the case with respect to two finite minds, one of which has only arrived at greater maturity than the other, how much more disproportionate must be the plans of Infinite Wisdom to our narrow faculties? and what force does such a consideration give to that appeal of the apostle, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Surely we owe as much deference to the wisdom, as much reliance on the kindness of the Eternal Parent, as we give to our earthly father! The infinite superiority of the divine perfections renders this concealment necessary. He cannot, on account of his incomparable greatness and excellence, bring his plans and operations within the comprehension of his creatures. Viewing eternity in all its extent, having present to his mind all that is past and all that is future, seeing the end from the beginning, looking forward to the remotest period, and embracing in his prospect all possible events, he regulates his conduct upon a scale which belongs only to him that inhabiteth eternity. Concealment is the necessary indication and proof as well as the effect of his being "infinite in counsel." The judgements of such a Being must, by the necessity of his nature, be, to our limited apprehensions, "a great deep." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"

2. The glory of God appears in concealing, because it evinces his entire independence on the wisdom, counsel, or co-operation, of any or all of his creatures. It is his prerogative to be the only Being to whom it is always safe to conceal his designs and purposes. It is seldom safe for persons, in the highest stations, to conduct a complicated scheme of operations, without taking advantage of counsel: "In the multitude of counsellors," says the wise man, "there is safety." No greater folly can be practised by so weak and frail a being as man, than, in matters of great moment, to decline taking the assistance of other minds. It is the privilege of very few, if any, mortals, to possess at once that penetration and that comprehension of view, which would render it expedient for them to tread the most perilous paths alone. He that despises the counsel of others, is, for the most part, sure to rue the effects of his folly. Nor is it necessary that the party consulted, should possess superior capacity or even knowledge of the subject in question. Different individuals see the same object in different lights, and a person of weaker intellect, not being immediately concerned, may be much more cool and impartial; some circumstances, therefore, which escaped the attention or the recollection of the most sagacious individual whose passions were excited, may occur to another person possessed of a very inferior degree of intellectual power. Those who are the immediate agents in any plan of operation, have their feelings generally too much excited, are too eagerly engaged in the chace, to be capable of discerning all those possibilities of disappointment and frustration which may present themselves to the calm survey of indifferent spectators. But it is infinitely worthy of the Divine Being, to give no account of any of his matters, with a view to obtain information from his creatures. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgement, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket.

and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."* "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."†

The Divine Being may, with infinite safety and propriety retire within himself into the secret recesses of his own essence, the depths of his own immensity, form his purposes apart, consult with none but himself. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." The resources of his own nature are infinitely sufficient. Of whom should *he* ask light, who is himself the Father of lights? Why should *he* take advice of creatures, of whose wisdom all human knowledge is but a spark? There is not a portion of intelligence in the universe which is not already his own: to consult with his creatures would therefore be but to consult with himself. "There is, indeed, a spirit in man; but it is the inspiration of the Almighty which giveth him understanding." The counsels of God are his own counsels, unmixed with any communication of human wisdom. He cannot mingle his designs with any others, or take associate minds into his cabinet. He needs not to receive back, nor can he receive back from his creatures, any portion of the light which has been diffused from that ocean of wisdom and intelligence which eternally resides in himself.

3. The divine glory is promoted by concealing, inasmuch as such a degree of obscurity as attends the partial manifestation of the divine will, and the progressive developement of the divine purposes, is eminently adapted to the state, exigency, and condition of man. Many important purposes are accomplished by this temperature betwixt concealment and manifestation, as

* Isaiah xl. 13—15, 17. † Rom. xi. 34—36.

we have already in part shown, and proceed more fully to exhibit in a few particulars.

(1.) The prophetic part of the word of God, while it contains some general intimation of future events is expressed in language, or denoted by imagery, proverbially obscure. This is intended to afford some general knowledge of the future, or it would not be prophecy; but, at the same time, obscurity forms a necessary ingredient. Were it free from that,—were it like the language of narrative,—it would give such a distinct knowledge of the future event as would lead some persons to use means for the purpose of accomplishing it by their own power, and tempt others presumptuously to endeavour to frustrate it. The design of prophecy is not to enable persons to anticipate the minute circumstances of events, but partly to excite in the mind a general expectation, by presenting a vague and shadowy outline; partly to afford a striking illustration of the power and providence of God, in bringing to pass those events on the arrival of a distant age. The infinite wisdom of God appears in his foretelling future events in such a manner, that when they arrive, they accurately correspond to the prophecy in a variety of particulars; while in the mean time, the events are so darkly shadowed, that the human agents, by whom they are accomplished, are ignorant that, in so doing, they are, in fact, fulfilling the counsels of heaven. They merely follow the dictates of their own minds, act agreeably to their own inclinations, and have no intention of bringing to pass those events to which the prophecy has reference. Nebuchadnezzar little supposed that he was a mere rod in the hand of the Deity, to chastise his own people. Cyrus, when he set out for Babylon to deliver them, little supposed that the hand of God had girded him, and prepared his way before him. Both were unconscious agents in accomplishing the purposes of that Divine Providence whose wisdom enlightened their path, and whose energy sustained them. God had foretold, by his prophets, the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jewish nation, and his crucifixion; yet the Jews, in delivering him up, as well

as Pilate and Herod in condemning and executing him, acted as freely, were therefore as much accountable, as if he had not been "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God delivered."* The treason that was practised by Judas on his Lord and Master had been announced by the psalmist David; yet how much is the wisdom of God magnified, in permitting this to remain so secret, that the very perpetrator was probably ignorant of it, acting with the same freedom and spontaneity, with as close an adherence to the dictates of his own heart, the peculiarities of his own character, as if no such prophecy had been recorded. Thus God secures the glory of his own foreknowledge, at the same time that he leaves undisturbed the sphere of human agency. Were future events so distinctly predicted as to be clearly foreseen, this would either destroy the proof of divine superintendence and agency, or would require such a perpetual miraculous control over the exercise of human faculties, as would be inconsistent with the state and condition of accountable creatures in a world of probation. It is also necessary that prophecy should not operate as precept; for, with some, the will of God clearly foreseen would have the force of a command, and would be fulfilled as such; which would confound human agency with divine. On the other hand, in consequence of this arrangement, none have it in their power to frustrate his designs: "He frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad;—turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish."† In order, therefore, that the free agency of creatures may be preserved, the time, and other circumstances of an event predicted, are permitted to remain so uncertain, that the persons who are to accomplish it continue ignorant of them till the event itself takes place.

Those great events which have materially affected the condition of the world, were foretold by the ancient prophets. But did the human agents know they were fulfilling these predictions? Nothing was farther from

* Acts ii. 23. † Isaiah xliv. 25

their view: "they meant not so, neither did their heart think so;"* they were merely gratifying their own little passions, pursuing no other end than their own sinister and selfish policy. They were instruments in the hands of the Divine Being, as passive in accomplishing his purposes, as the axe or hammer in the hands of a man. The predictions were therefore mingled with much obscurity, as I have before remarked, to leave the free agency of creatures undisturbed, and consequently their accountability unimpaired.

Prophecy is not intended to give men such a knowledge of futurity as to enable even the most sagacious to predict events. Those who have attempted with certainty to assign, beforehand, particular prophecies to particular events, have uniformly failed in their presumptuous endeavours. The design of prophecy is only to afford some general intimation, which may operate as either warning or encouragement. Its chief use is, after the event has taken place, to assure men of the universal providence of God, and convince them of that wisdom which foresees all future events, and that power which accomplishes them when the appointed period arrives. When, therefore the Divine Being has been disposed to lift, in some degree, the veil which conceals futurity, he has only done it so far as to excite a general and indefinite expectation of the event, by exhibiting its general character and features, but by no means to disclose such circumstances of time, place, and instrumentality, as might interfere, in the least degree, with the morality of human actions.

(2.) The Divine Being, by giving no account of the design of many dispensations of his providence, trains us to submission. He is the fit and proper object of trust to mankind. Trust in God is the grand principle of religion; it is another word, indeed, for faith, as that term is applied in the New Testament; the grand principle which distinguishes good men from men of the world. The former trust in God; and, trusting in him, their

* Isaiah x. 7.

souls are kept in peace. They commit their way to him, and resign their wills into his hands. God demands from his creatures universal confidence; not only explicit, but also implicit. The former is that which arises from a clear perception of his intentions and designs. When we are able to trace his counsels, our trust in him is regulated by our knowledge of his ways and purposes, and this must precede any exercise of the latter kind of trust. But when the Divine Being has, by such a manifestation of himself, by such a degree of illumination, established a conviction of his paternal character, and sufficiently revealed the principles of his government, it is worthy of his majesty to put his rational creatures to the test. Having had innumerable experimental proofs of his loving-kindness, and of those tender mercies which are over all his works, should we not be ready to follow him in a path that we cannot discern, even when his footsteps are in the great deep? May not the Father of the universe require all his rational offspring to place unlimited confidence in himself, to be willing to fall into his hands, to commit all their concerns to his disposal, to abandon themselves to his pleasure? When we consider, also, the provision he has made for our eternal happiness in the economy of redemption, in those exceeding great and precious promises which are there exhibited, and especially in the gift of his own Son, the sum and substance of all possible communications of good, how infinitely fit is it for such a creature, having to deal with such a God, to say, with the most entire self-oblivion, "Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight;" joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, are indifferent to me, since thou canst bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and cause those "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, to work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

(3.) Another advantage derived from this proceeding, is, that it tends to promote humility and vigilance, at the same time that it excites to diligence and exertion. As we are to give account of our conduct, it is necessary that the Divine Being should afford us a rule of action,

and this must be clear and determinate. But it is not necessary that we should be informed of the issue of actions; these, therefore, he is pleased to keep in his own hand. Yet, as without the hope of attaining some advantage, to stimulate us to activity, the mind would become lethargic, because we should feel ourselves chained down by a fatal destiny, in helpless despondency; such a constitution is wisely established, that success may be the general rule, failure the exception. But occasional instances of the latter are useful, by teaching us not to lean to our own understanding. Men are now, notwithstanding their blindness to the future, too much disposed to "sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag;" but if they were capable of certainly foreseeing the issue of their schemes, —if the battle were always to the strong, and riches to men of understanding,—how would the strong man glory in his strength, the rich man in his riches! These objects of pursuit would be the source of most intemperate idolatry, and would utterly corrupt the mind of their possessor, by leading him to glory in himself, and not in God. On the other hand, were there no connexion between the cultivation of certain qualities and success, did no advantage result from the possession of them, there would be no motive to action, no inducement to make those exertions which promote the improvement of mankind, and of the institutions of society. Still, the knowledge that a successful result cannot be calculated upon with certainty, greatly tends to stamp vanity upon all that relates to the present world, and should lead men to trust in the living God, whose promises, resting on a certain basis, are secure of their final accomplishment.

Our ignorance of the events that may befall us, is also highly salutary. Were the period of that great and final event, death, perfectly certain, we should be tempted, during the interval, to sit down in the indulgence of security. Such knowledge would induce, in most men, the greatest rashness and presumption. While the event was at a distance, they would gratify their appetites

without restraint; they would, upon system, procrastinate attention to their eternal interests. Whereas, now, the uncertainty of its arrival furnishes the highest reason for being always ready, and renders the neglect of preparation the greatest folly and infatuation. It should operate as a solemn admonition from God to perpetual watchfulness and care, not to leave that undone, which, if undone at a dying hour, renders the doing of all other things merely vanity and vexation of spirit, while we are left in a state of inconsolable wretchedness. All pretence for delay being hereby cut off, the inattention of the majority of mankind to these divine warnings becomes utterly inexcusable; especially if we consider the magnitude of the event itself, and that the change it effects in our condition is not only awfully great, but will continue, beyond any possibility of future change, to eternity. Hence our Saviour urges this circumstance, as one of the most powerful motives to incessant vigilance: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. If the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt, your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the coming of their Lord. Who is that wise and faithful servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing?" God is pleased to deal with us, in the economy of his providence and grace, as creatures that possess reason, and are, therefore, accountable;—that can look forward, and make provision for the exigencies of the future,—and whose great business it is to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." The great necessity which attaches to us, is that of changing worlds; while our life is but a fleeting vapour, liable to be instantly extinguished. That event is perpetually suspended over us, as the inevitable circumstance attending our destiny; but we are in total ignorance of the time of its arrival. We cannot, therefore, without the greatest presumption, call a single moment our own. How is this arrangement adapted to fix and

concentrate our attention on the momentous event; to cause it to combine itself with all our plans and counsels! If we are wise, we shall constantly remember our latter end, be always ready, and not suffer that day to come upon us like a thief. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments."

There is another less solemn, yet important view of this arrangement, which equally illustrates the wisdom of God in concealing future events. Were the time of our death foreseen, what a melancholy character would it impart to the pursuits and occupations of the human race! If every man saw the moment of his death continually before him, how would his thoughts be fixed to the fatal spot; and, upon its near approach, the consideration of it would probably absorb every other. With respect to our fellow-creatures, how would it poison the springs of enjoyment, were parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, able to calculate with certainty the period of each other's lives! We should seem to be walking among the victims of death; the scenes of human existence would lose all cheerfulness, animation, and beauty. The interests of society would also sustain most serious injury. Many great and noble enterprises would never have been begun could the persons, who in the hope of life engaged in them, have foreseen, that before they could be concluded, they themselves would be snatched away by the hand of death. Many discoveries, by which great benefit has been conferred on the world, would not have been elicited. Few efforts probably would be made to attain any object, the consequences of which terminate with the life of the party, if he foresaw that they would be intercepted by death. Who would venture to engage in any lucrative employment, if he certainly knew that the benefit would not be even partially realised during the term of his mortal existence? But, happily for mankind, events are concealed—duties only are made known. With respect also to calamities which stop short of death, how wisely is it ordered, that, in consequence of their coming upon us by surprise, the courage and fortitude

requisite to encounter them are not weakened by a presentiment of dread! The prospect of them perpetually before our eyes would throw a cloud over the whole path of life, and when they arrived would cause them to fall upon us with supernumerary and redoubled weight. On the other hand, could we foresee our successes, they would lose much of their flavour and relish. The surprise with which they often come upon us is one element in our enjoyment of them.

The future world also has been placed, by the wisdom of God, just in that light in which it is most for our benefit that it should be placed. Were we fixed in the situation of the apostle John, were the heavenly state continually laid open to our view, religion would be no longer a voluntary service; we should be forced to attend to objects so transcendently glorious brought thus near to us. Could we distinctly hear the voices, like mighty thunderings, heard within the vail, they would render us deaf to every earthly sound: religion would be no longer matter of choice; and, consequently, faith would be no longer matter of virtue. The preference of present to future interests, and therefore the exercise of self-denial, would be impossible. But the Divine Being has been pleased to throw over the heavenly world a great degree of obscurity. Jesus Christ has indeed brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; has raised our hopes to the highest point, by investing the future state of glory with unspeakable elevation and grandeur; but has not explicitly taught us in what that state will consist:—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We know enough of futurity to make it become the great object of our attention; although it does not so press upon our organs as to render us insensible to present scenes and interests.

4. The glory of God is concerned in concealing much in his character, works, providence, and revelation, because this will probably be a source of great additional happiness to the redeemed, and mingle itself among the elements of devotional enjoyment in the eternal state. A degree of surprise and astonishment, which cannot

consist wtth the perfect comprehension of whatever falls under our cognizance, appears to be one ingredient in the highest degree of felicity of which a rational being is susceptible. There is a principle in the constitution of our nature, which renders us dissatisfied with what we thoroughly understand in all its parts. When there is nothing more to be discovered, from that moment it begins to pall upon us, and we must pass to something which will give scope to the activities of the human mind.

The Deity is intended to be the everlasting field of the human intellect, as well as the everlasting object of the human heart, the everlasting portion of all holy and happy minds, who are destined to spend a blissful but ever-active eternity in the contemplation of his glory. This can only be effected by his concealing himself. He will for ever remain "The Unknown God." We shall ever be conscious that we know little compared with what remains to be known of him: that our most rapturous and lofty songs fall infinitely short of his excellence. If we stretch our powers to the uttermost, we shall never exhaust his praise, never render him adequate honour, never discharge the full amount of claim which he possesses upon our veneration, obedience, and gratitude. When we have loved him with the greatest fervour, our love will still be cold compared with his title to our devoted attachment. This will render him the continual source of fresh delight to all eternity. His perfection will be an abyss never to be fathomed; there will be depths in his excellence which we shall never be able to penetrate. We shall delight in losing ourselves in his infinity. An unbounded prospect will be extended before us; looking forward through the vista of interminable ages, we shall find a blissful occupation for our faculties, which can never end; while those faculties will retain their vigour unimpaired, flourish in the bloom of perpetual youth; .... and the full consciousness remain, that the Being whom we contemplate can never be found out to perfection ..... that he may always add to the impression of what we know, by throwing a veil of indefinite obscurity over his character. The shades in which he will for ever conceal himself, will have the same tendency to excite our adoring wonder as the effulgence of his glory; the depths in which he will retire from our view, the recesses of his wisdom and power, as the open paths of his manifestation. Were we capable of comprehending the Deity, devotion would not be the sublimest employment in which we can engage. In the contemplation of such a Being, we are in no danger of going beyond our subject; we are conversing with an infinite object .... in the depths of whose essence and purposes we are for ever lost. This will probably give all the emotions of freshness and astonishment to the raptures of the beatific vision, and add a delightful zest to the devotions of eternity. This will enable the Divine Being to pour in continually fresh accessions of light; to unfold new views of his character, disclose new parts of his perfection, open new mansions in himself, in which the mind will have ample room to expatiate. Thus shall we learn, to eternity, that, so far from exhausting his infinite fulness, there still remain infinite recesses in his nature unexplored—scenes in his counsels, never brought before the view of his creatures; that we know but "parts of his ways;" and that, instead of exhausting our theme, we are not even approaching nearer to the comprehension of the Eternal All. It is the mysteriousness of God, the inscrutability of his essence, the shade in which he is invested, that will excite those peculiar emotions, which nothing but transcendent perfection and unspeakable grandeur can inspire.

Before I conclude this discourse, permit me to remind you, that while there are many things which God conceals, and thereby advances his glory, he has made manifest all that it is essential for man to know. Whatever is intimately connected with our duty is most plainly taught; whatever is important to our welfare and happiness is fully revealed. Do not for a moment imagine that he has concealed any thing that bears a near relation to your interest. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." He has distinctly set before you the

good and evil of a future life. It is true, you know not the time of your death, but you know that you are mortal; you know not the particulars of what will succeed death, but you know that there will be a resurrection of the dead, "both of the just and also of the unjust;" that "they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." Jesus Christ has disclosed in the gospel, as far as they are important for any practical purposes, the realities of eternity; has announced to you his second appearance to raise the dead, and decide the eternal destinies of the human race; to separate between the righteous and the wicked, place every individual of mankind in one of those classes, and divide them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He has told you that he will say to the former, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and to the latter, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He has assured you, that those who die in a state of impenitence, unbelief, and alienation from God, will sink into eternal misery; that their doom shall be to depart into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels. Those, on the contrary, who are righteous, who are penitent believers, shall be raised in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and then caught up to meet the Lord in the air; afterwards be assessors with him in the judgement; and, at the end of that solemn process, shall enter with him through the gates into the city, and be for ever with the Lord. You are assured, that, immediately after the event of your death has taken place, there will remain no possibility of a change in your condition—that you will take possession of all the horrors of hell, or all the glories of heaven, the moment that the vapour of your life is extinguished in the element of death. He has told you, that you must have to do with Christ, either in the exercise of faith and trust here, or of astonishment and surprise, when you shall lift up your eyes and see, in the person of a neglected Saviour, your offended Sovereign

and righteous Judge! "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; they also that pierced him shall wail because of him." "Before him shall be gathered all nations." They who have not received his gospel, submitted to his sceptre, cast themselves into the arms of his grace ..... shall be banished for ever from his presence. The divine glory is intrusted to him; the destinies of the world are committed to his hands. You have no other resource but to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." He has not only disclosed to you the fact, but also many of the circumstances and appendages of that solemn assize, in which the eternal destinies of all mankind will be determined;—that a great white throne will be spread, and from the face of him that sitteth upon it the heavens and the earth will flee away;—that the books shall be opened, and all men judged out of the things written in those books, according to their works;*—that the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and an eternity of happiness or misery dealt out to every one by his mighty hand, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil:—that the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up; that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat;—that for the abode of the righteous there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;—that in the bottomless abyss prepared for apostate angels, all the wicked shall be for ever confined.

These are subjects on which the wisdom of man can say nothing, or can utter but the feeble articulations of infancy ..... The highest efforts of human sagacity reach not beyond the bounds of time; they cannot pass the threshold of eternity. They are scanty and inadequate,—and leave the world in darkness and misery, compared with these discoveries of revelation. Do not

* Rev. xx. 11—13.

conclude, from the partial obscurity which attends some of its truths, that religion is not the great concern of accountable immortal creatures, or that you will be justified in disregarding such affecting prospects as these. No, my brethren, this obscurity is not such as to hide from you your great interest, to make a right choice doubtful, or render it matter of the least hesitation whether you should serve God or not. God has revealed enough, where the light of the gospel comes, to give men the clearest information concerning their eternal welfare; has set before them life, and has set before them death; has pointed out the broad and the narrow way; shown them the path of destruction, that they may avoid it—and the way of life, that they may walk in it. Jesus Christ has come to render these things so plain and obvious, that even "wayfaring men, though fools, may not err therein." Though, with respect to the constitution of his person, mysterious as his Divine Father, being "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person;" with respect to the practical purpose of his incarnation, the great design of his appearance in human flesh, he is "the Light of the world: whoso followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."† If you are earnest in seeking the salvation of your souls, you have all the evidence you can wish; you are distinctly informed, that a remedy has been provided, exactly suited to your case. Though you are guilty, the blood of Christ can expiate that guilt; though you are polluted, the Spirit of Christ can cleanse from that pollution. The gospel is every way adapted to your wants and misery. It has pleased the Father, that in Christ "all fulness should dwell." You are invited to come to him at this moment, to receive out of that fulness all spiritual blessings—pardon, sanctification and life everlasting. He has given you, in reference to these, "line upon line, precept upon precept." Jesus Christ has become the incarnate wisdom of God. No person now need perish for want of a profound understanding, since the method of salvation has been brought down to the level of the meanest capacity: "Wisdom stands at the corners of the streets, and cries; To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Surely these are the deep things of God, which the Spirit who searcheth all things alone has explored; which the wisdom of the world never knew, the tongue of human eloquence never proclaimed, the discoveries of human philosophy never approached: but now they form the very elements of piety, so that the meanest person cannot neglect them without living in a practical defiance of God, and contempt of his authority. He has thrown an air of obscurity over a thousand other things, but not over "the things that make for your peace." You are not left in any uncertainty as to the basis of hope towards God. He has clearly taught you what you must do to be saved; how you may draw nigh to God, even to his seat; and through what medium you may pour out your hearts before him. "Behold (he says) I lay in Zion a foundation-stone. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." You know which is the path that will bring you to eternal blessedness; . . . . . that with shame and confusion of face, on account of your past transgressions, you "flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you;" that he may "of God be made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This is a plain path, open to all. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God;" but these are "things revealed, that belong unto us, and to our children for ever."

Among the things fully revealed, is the placability of God, his readiness to receive the chief of sinners who repent of their sins and believe the gospel. He stands with open arms to receive returning prodigals. Though he condescends not to reveal the secrets of his wisdom.

* John viii. 12. † John xiv. 6.

counsel, and government, he has opened the secrets of his heart, displayed the riches of his compassion and grace. He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." This is your wisdom; this is your happiness; this is the only way to everlasting life. Let us all apply our hearts and consciences to the plain undeniable declarations of revelation. There will be no excuse for any one who lives a sinful, careless, and worldly life, and refuses to enter into covenant with God by the sacrifice of the Redeemer and to serve him, on account of the obscurity of the doctrine of salvation. That obscurity is not of such a nature as to darken its evidence, or render in the least degree doubtful, any thing that relates to the duties and prospects of accountable immortal creatures. There is no knowledge of any value to you in comparison with this—the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified. You are called upon, by believing in him, to unite yourselves to his promises, and cleave to his unsearchable riches. Have you done this? have you believed in this Saviour, who is the Light of the world? Are you walking in the light; or treasuring up materials of accummulated condemnation, by saying to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," —though he approaches you, not in the character of a judge, but as the Father of mercies and the God of all grace, giving his "only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life?" Let not this be "your condemnation, that light is come into the world, but that you loved darkness rather than light because your deeds are evil. But "walk in the light while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Submit to Jesus Christ; be guided by his holy truths and precepts; and you will attain that happiness which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man."

III.

ON THE DUTY, HAPPINESS, AND HONOUR, OF MAINTAINING THE COURSE PRESCRIBED TO US BY PROVIDENCE.

[PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL, MAZE POND, SOUTHWARK, MAY 26, 1811.]

ACTS xiii. 25.—*As John fulfilled his course.**

THE life of every individual may be compared to a river:—rising in obscurity, increasing by the accession of tributary streams, and, after flowing through a longer or shorter distance, losing itself in some common receptacle. The lives of individuals also, like the course of rivers, may be more or less extensive, but will all vanish and disappear in the gulf of eternity.—Whilst a stream is confined within its banks, it fertilizes, enriches, and improves, the country through which it passes; but if it deserts its channel, it becomes injurious and destructive, a sort of public nuisance, and, by stagnating in lakes and marshes, its exhalations diffuse pestilence and disease around. Some glide away in obscurity and insignificance; whilst others become celebrated, traverse continents, give names to countries, and assign the boundaries of empires. Some are tranquil and gentle in their course; whilst others, rushing in torrents, dashing over precipices, and tumbling in waterfalls, become objects of terror and dismay. But, however diversified their character, or their direction, all agree in having their course short, limited, and determined: soon they fall into one capacious receptacle; their waters eventually mix in the waves of the ocean. Thus human characters, however various, have one common destiny; their course of action may be greatly diversified, but they all lose themselves in the ocean of eternity.

Few have appeared on the stage of action whose life

* Printed from the Notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq.

was more important than that of the great prophet mentioned in my text. His course was a very extraordinary one, distinguished in some sense above all others, our blessed Lord himself only and always excepted. John was called to a very singular work; his ministry formed an epoch in the history of the church. It was the connecting link between the two dispensations. He first preached the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

The most extraordinary events began with the baptism of John, and continued until Christ was taken up into heaven. His peculiar office was to announce the Saviour of the world as then present in it; other prophets had spoken of him as *to come;* "*but there standeth,*" says John, "*among you one whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*" He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" and whilst he was actually engaged in his commission, he was able to declare—"*Behold, he standeth among you.*" His commission was high;—to reclaim an apostate people; "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;" "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." His career, too, was extraordinary, and his character and course marked and different from all others. Much of the wisdom of Providence appears in fitting the instrument to the work. The work appointed to John was to reclaim a nation from its departure from God, to rouse a people sunk in insensibility and impenitence, to preach repentance, to proclaim the approach of the kingdom of heaven, to usher in a higher economy, a new dispensation; and for all this he was admirably qualified. He was endued with the spirit and power of Elias. His spirit was undaunted and unyielding; he rebuked the pride of kings. He was indifferent and insensible alike to the charms of pleasure, the allurement of pomp, the smiles of power, and the frowns of greatness. His whole soul was concentrated in his object:—he was superior to the world; its forms

and fashions made no impression on his mind, and left no traces. He was austere in his manner, abstemious in his food, rustic in his apparel: he partook of the wildness of the wilderness in which he first made his appearance. "He had his raiment of camels' hair, a leathern girdle was about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey." These are lively images of his work. "Then went out unto him Jerusalem and all Judea, and the region round about Jordan; and were baptized of him, confessing their sins."

His ministry finished the legal, and brought in the evangelical dispensation. His voice was like the strong wind that bloweth—the whirlwind that maketh the earth to quake—the loud blast of that trumpet which was to wake the nations—the earthquake and the whirlwind which immediately preceded "the still small voice." His career was brilliant, and his success extraordinary. A large portion of the Jews became his converts, at least for a time: even the Scribes and Pharisees listened to him. "He was a burning and a shining light;" the apostles themselves were many of them first his disciples, and received from him those instructions which prepared them for the coming of the Messiah. By the authentic historian, Josephus, he is spoken of in terms of the highest encomium. It is remarkable, above all, that he was the only prophet born of woman, who was himself the subject of prophecy.

As his course was short, so was his end violent and tragical. He fell a martyr to his fidelity, and the artifices of an intriguing woman. Having rebuked Herod on account of his incestuous intercourse with his brother's wife, he was sacrificed to her resentment. He disappeared soon: his course was hurried and impetuous; eager, as it were, to reach its destination, and to mingle his grand soul with its kindred elements in eternity. He was raised up for a particular service; and when that was accomplished, he was removed. He was not *the* light, but the harbinger of that light, the morning star that was to usher in the Sun of Righteousness. "He bore witness of the light, but he was not that light;"

and no sooner did that light appear than he was withdrawn, that nothing might divide the great homage due to the Saviour, according to his own prediction—"He must increase, but I must decrease."

Having, perhaps, already detained you too long in contemplating the character and conduct of John the Baptist, I shall occupy what remains of our time, in illustrating and inculcating two or three practical observations, founded on the words of the text.

I. That there is a prescribed course or sphere of action appointed to every individual by the Author of our nature.

We are not a race of independent creatures abandoned to live without control: we are not sent into the world to follow the dictates of our own will. We cannot commit a greater mistake than to suppose that we are in any sense *our own;* we belong to another; even our limbs and faculties do not so much belong to ourselves, as we do to our Maker. To do his will, to conform to his pleasure, to keep his commandments, to fulfil his designs, to serve the end of his government, and to promote his glory; these are the great ends of our existence; and to attain them ought to be the fundamental law of our being: otherwise we live in vain, worse than in vain; and it would have been better for us never to have had an existence.

There is one great principle of a holy life, which is one and the same in all who live as they ought; and that is, conforming ourselves to the will of God, complying with his plan, doing every thing to please and glorify him. Thus our Saviour himself when in this world was devoted to his Father's will; this was his object constantly, even when observed by those around him. It cannot be better exemplified than in that beautiful saying of his, when he was requested to take refreshment at the well of Jacob—"I have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of; my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work;" and it is doing the will of God from the heart, which implies a careful attention to all the manifestations of it, and a

reverential regard to all the discoveries of it, with a fixed and determined resolution to comply with it whenever and wherever it is known. This, as I said, is the end of our existence, the business of our life; and we live to no purpose, or to a bad one, but as we conform to it. But, although this is the universal principle by which all are to be actuated and guided, yet it admits of great and numerous variations in its practical application. The principle is the same; but when it comes to be acted upon by individuals, and embodied in the experience and conduct of men in the several conditions of life, it gives birth to an endless diversity. To do the will of God, and to promote his glory, is the proper object and end of all: but the manner in which an apostle, for instance, was called upon to do this, is not that in which an ordinary teacher is to do it; nor the manner of an ordinary teacher that of a private christian. The duties of a sovereign are extremely different from those of his ministers and officers of state; and those again, from the duties of inferior magistrates; and of magistrates, from those of private subjects. Of the rich it is required "to do good and to communicate," to sustain the cause of God and truth in the world, to support public institutions of a charitable and beneficial nature, and freely to distribute of their abundance to the necessities of their fellow-creatures; of the poor, to be prudent, diligent, careful; and so on.

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Thus the several conditions and relations of individuals have their respective duties, in which they are to do the will of God, in "*fulfilling their course;*" but in each and all, the same care and attention ought to be maintained, to the one grand principle of which we have been speaking: one spirit should animate the whole;—one great end, under whatever variety of form and mode.

In the principles of human nature, and in the powers and faculties of our bodies and senses, there is a general agreement: yet no two individuals of the human race are alike; and the same variety exists in moral arrange-

ments. In the elements which compose the principle of holiness, the essential ingredients are the same; but when they come to be applied and embodied in a right course of action, they often seem widely different. Although the end is the same in all, yet the manner in which this end is viewed will be various; the rays of light, when blended in day, are simple and of a uniform colour; but when they are refracted through a prism, they exhibit all the colours of the rainbow. Such, my brethren, are the principles of holiness, and their diversified action in individuals: but, I repeat it, it is doing the will of God in all;—this, this is the object, the grand vital principle, that animates good men in all ages in all circumstances, of all classes and denominations. This is the true catholic spirit, which unites all the members of the true church; and in proportion as men live well, and live for eternity, this is the ruling and governing principle,—to glorify God.

II. We observe that there is a set and limited time allotted to that sphere and course of action: "There is an appointed time to man upon the earth." The course of man is not indeterminate, but has its limits, and they are narrow: "Man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time." If we had not the testimony of scripture on this point, it would be reasonable to conclude, from our observation of nature and the world around us, that the termination of human life is not left in uncertainty, but that it is directed by the wisdom of Him who himself is the Author of existence. If "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his knowledge," much less can the death of a human creature take place without his interposition. Whether we fall premature victims to disease, or perish by what men call accident, or sink under the burdens of age, still it is according to the will of God, "whose counsels shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure."

This course is not only limited, but it is short. It is but a little time that we spend on earth: "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and my years are as nothing before thee."

Whether we drop in infancy, from the cradle to the grave, or are cut off in youth; whether we attain to manhood, or even to old age; still we soon arrive at the boundary, we soon reach the end of our course, and often without passing through its intermediate stages. Thus, indeed, verifying the language, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth."

The stream of human existence is rapid and impetuous; its waves follow each other in quick succession, and many are ingulfed almost as soon as they appear. Early in infancy the stream glides away like a summer brook, and leaves the fond parent mournfully to recall the pleasure he received in contemplating its unsullied purity and its playful meanders. Of those who set out with us in this journey of life, how many have disappeared from our side! what changes have taken place in the circle of our connexions since we began our course; how few can we now number of those with whom, in the early period of our lives, "we took sweet counsel!" Every year makes great changes. How great are the changes, my brethren, which have been made in the face of *this* congregation! Where are many of our friends in whom we delighted! They have finished their course; they have passed through the gate that opens into the invisible world; they have completed their probation, and appeared at the tribunal of Infinite Majesty; they have done with the converse of mortals, and have seen and heard things which it is impossible to utter; they have for ever finished their course.

III. Our happiness and our honour consist entirely in completing the course which God has assigned to us. In filling up the sphere of action which he has prescribed, and which his providence has marked out to us, there are two great mistakes into which we are liable to fall, in our views of this subject.

1. That there is some other happiness and honour than that which is to be found in fulfilling our course, or, in other words, occupying that sphere of duty which God hath been pleased to assign us. Some are looking, for their satisfaction, to the pleasures of sin; others to the

gratification which the world affords; some attach their notion of happiness to some external situation not yet found, and imagine it is to be met with there. Settle it in your minds, my dear friends, that the only happiness worth seeking,—that which will live in all circumstances, and abide the vicissitudes of life,—our only real and proper good,—consists in *fulfilling our course*, conforming to the divine will, imitating the divine perfections, obeying God's commands, walking in the light of his countenance, and being at peace with him. The prescription of this, as the way to happiness, is amongst the fixed laws of our nature: it is "founded amongst the floods, deeper than the foundations of the everlasting mountains." It forms a part of the constitution of heaven itself. It was amongst the original decrees promulgated by God in the silence of the universe. Eternal truth has declared, that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." Could you ask the children of men, one by one, at the verge of life,—and especially those who have passed into eternity,—from the very commencement of time, whether they have been happy, and what constituted their happiness, there is not one who would not confess that the fear of the Lord was the only wisdom, and the knowledge of the Most High the supreme good.

If you could find another species of happiness, it would be what the wisdom of man has not yet discovered. You must look into some corner of the world which the eye of Omniscience has not penetrated; you must defy Omnipotence, and give the lie to eternal truth. "Where," says the Almighty, "is the place of wisdom?" All creatures testify that it is not in them. But God declares, "The fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom."

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Accursed, or abandoned, be that impiety, shut out from the universe be the shadow of that conception, which would represent happiness to be found in the depths, the heights, the breadths, or in any thing separate

from the service, the knowledge, and the love of the Eternal Being. This, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This fountain of water flows for the refreshment of the meanest peasant, as well as of the greatest monarch; this is an universal school of wisdom, into which all are invited. You may be happy, but there is but one way, and that is, "fulfilling your course," consulting the will of God, commending yourself to the guidance of his wisdom in a life of religion, living not to yourselves but unto God, seeking satisfaction in the mortification of every inclination which crosses his everlasting purposes: you may even "lose your life for his sake," and you "will find it."

2. The second mistake against which we should guard you, is that of supposing we should be able to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to our own sphere of action, better in some other state; and being therefore dissatisfied with that precise state in which his providence has placed us. The wisdom of each consists in fulfilling his *own* course. The course of John the Baptist was difficult, obstructed with afflictions, and beset with dangers: but he fulfilled it. How many objections might he have formed against the precise course assigned him! how many reasons might he have advanced for supposing that in some other sphere he might have glorified God more entirely! But he yielded himself to the wisdom of God.

Some are ready to suppose that they should more easily comply with the dictates of religion, and more easily surmount temptations, in a condition different from their own; that they should have acted better in another combination of circumstances; and thus venture, if I may so speak, to lay the blame of their defection and misconduct upon God, who has fixed the bounds of their habitation.

The poor may easily imagine, how amiably and liberally they should have acted if their lot had been cast among the rich; and the rich, on the other hand, how safely they should have been preserved from a variety

of snares, if they had been screened by the privacy of the poor. The young will ascribe their errors to the impetuosity so natural to their age; those who are more advanced are ready to imagine that if they enjoyed more leisure, and were not so entangled with the cares and perplexities of their active station, they should be better able to attend to the concerns of a future life. The aged are wishing for the energy and capacity of attention which belongs to youth: their time, they plead, is passed; it is too late for them to change.

But all these are great mistakes. Our true happiness is to be found in fulfilling our present course, conforming ourselves to the duties of that station in which we are placed, in consulting the will of God under the circumstances in which we actually are, and improving the opportunity which our condition affords. If we do not *now* love and fear the Supreme Being,—if we cannot *now* resist temptation, mortify corruption, and devote ourselves to the service of God,—if we *now* feel no resolution "to run the race that is set before us,"—we may be assured that a change of circumstances will not avail. It is not a change of state that we want, but a change of heart: the disease is within, in the state of our minds, the bent of our dispositions, which will follow us into another situation, produce the same effects, and place us at the same distance from happiness. What you want, my brethren, and what we all want, is the renovating principle of divine grace, that sanctifying principle within us; to have "the law of God written in our hearts," without which no other change will avail. The grace of God in the heart will preserve us in any and every situation, and in all circumstances will be fruitful of advantage to our souls: it will guide us and keep us humble in prosperity, cheer us in adversity, and render its discipline salutary; it will sustain and direct us in life, support us in death, and go with us into eternity. It was this that enabled Joseph to preserve his chastity in the midst of temptation; that supported Daniel in the very jaws of lions; and inspired The confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in

"the flaming fiery furnace." This is the principle which brings God to our view in seasons of the greatest trial, by piercing the cloud of flesh, and enabling us to see him that is invisible to the eyes of sense. The man who possesses this principle will adorn an elevated condition, with humility; and a condition of obscurity and poverty, with integrity and resignation.

If, therefore, there be any persons in this assembly that feel a conviction of the importance of a religious life, and a course of right actions, but yet are sensible of a moral inability, let them have recourse to the fountain of divine grace. Come to Him who is eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame. Cast yourselves at the feet of the Saviour; be conscious of your weakness, misery, and guilt. Pray to Him who is the fountain of all light, that the beams of his grace may be communicated to you; that his light may shine into your hearts, to give unto you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

This will govern the heart as well as guide the understanding, direct the will, and regulate the affections: this will make you holy; this will subdue temptation; this will be an antidote against the infection of evil examples. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; for who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" This will surmount the disorders of life, the fear of death, and conduct the soul to everlasting felicity.

Finally, my brethren, let each of us attach himself with more seriousness, alacrity, and fervour than ever, to the proper duties of his station; let each consider in what instances he fails to fulfil his course; let each examine himself, and see wherein he fails to observe "the good and perfect law of God." Let him discover "his easily besetting sin," and see how far this has perverted his course, and turned his affections from God.

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The time is coming when you will perceive that

there is no true wisdom to be found but in doing the will of God. The value of *time* is to be estimated by the opportunity which it gives us of laying up riches for *eternity*. He is the most steady pursuer of his own interest who has "laid up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Some of you, perhaps, have not even begun: you have done nothing yet for the glory of God; you have been living entirely to yourselves; and your lives, it may be, are approaching to a close. Begin then to be wise; reflect on what you have heard; and remember, it will be ratified by the impressions of a dying hour.

There are some present, perhaps, who are near to the end of their course, and have the satisfaction to reflect that they have had their conversation with God. Happy such persons, whatever their station in life may be! Let the consideration of your having so nearly fulfilled your course, make you more diligent and circumspect in what remains of it. In a very short time your conflict will be over, your corruptions will be slain. So near to victory, do not let the weapons of warfare fall out of your hands: "Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life."

The memory of John the Baptist is perpetuated with honour, because he "fulfilled his course;" while that of Herod and Pontius Pilate are covered with infamy. Which of these characters will you imitate? Will you be among those whom God condescends to honour, to whom he will say, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of our Lord?" or will you now surround yourselves with a few sparks of worldly pleasure, and lie down in eternal darkness?

Whenever the gospel is preached, this alternative is set before you: the alternative of "shining like the sun for ever;" or of awaking to shame and everlasting contempt." If there were no judgement-seat at which we must appear, we might have our election between peace of conscience and the gratification of our desires. But our course here is a preparation for our course hereafter. Never

dissever in your minds a life of piety and a life of honour; there is no glory, no happiness, but in the love and service of God.

Hear the language of the apostle Paul, in the near prospect of a violent death: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Do you believe this? If you do not, you are not christians; you wear a mask. But, if you do, the conviction and confession of this truth will for ever be a source of torment to you, unless you now imitate the conduct of this apostle, give yourselves up to God, and embrace and pursue a holy and religious life in Christ Jesus.

IV.

CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE, CONDESCENSION, AND EXALTATION.

[PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL IN DEAN-STREET, SOUTHWARK, JUNE 27, 1813.]

PHILIP. ii. 5—9.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.**

IN this chapter, it is manifest from the context that the apostle is inculcating upon professors of the gospel a spirit of condescension and humility. "Let nothing," saith he, "be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than him-

* From the notes of W. B. Gurney, Esq., corrected, in a few cases, by comparison with the notes sent by six other friends. See Mr. Hall's own sketch of the argument, Vol. V. pp. 125—130.—ED.

self: look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

His intention is to enforce a disposition that enters very deeply into the lowly spirit of the gospel, an attention to the circumstances of others, a preference of their interests to our own, and a willingness to condescend to make great sacrifices of our own interest and gratification, of our own honour and advantage, to promote their good. It is that particular species of christian virtue and benevolence, which stands opposed to the tenacious maintenance of outward distinctions and dignities, that insists on all the honour and pre-eminence which we might be supposed to have a right to claim; and lays by its own advantage and honour for the sake of promoting the spiritual and temporal interests of our fellow-creatures, and especially of our fellow-christians.

Of this disposition he presents a striking example in the noble conduct of our Saviour, and in the great doctrines which are exhibited in his incarnation and converse in this world, as well as in the wonderful example of love and humility which he showed in becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and he shows that by such a conduct as this it was that Jesus Christ rose in our nature to that inexpressible majesty with which he is at present invested. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Permit me to request your attention while I endeavour to set forth, in some imperfect measure, that example of great condescension and humility which is exhibited in the passage before us.

Now, in the idea of condescension, we must suppose a superior and an inferior,—one by whom that virtue is exercised, and another to whom it is shown. Where there is a perfect equality, there is no room for the exercise of this particular species of virtue; much less,

where a superior only is in question: for, though we may behave ourselves with the utmost propriety towards an equal or a superior, yet it is impossible that he should be the object of our condescension; this would involve a very great absurdity in language.

Whenever we speak of this species of excellency, it always implies that it is an inferior towards whom it is exerted; this is the necessary prerequisite for the exercise of this particular form of christian and moral virtue. In like manner, it is evident that a stoop, a descent from some dignity or previous elevation, is always supposed in the exercise of this branch of virtue. It always implies a resignation of some claim to a superior station, a foregoing of some advantage or preeminence. It is also necessary that such humiliation should be perfectly voluntary; a voluntary lowering of ourselves beneath the station which was previously occupied; a laying down of some advantage or dignity. There is a strong contrast supposed in a series of acts of condescension, or even in one, between the station we previously occupied and that in which we place ourselves. There is also an implied opposition between something we possess and something we resign, and the station to which we are reduced in consequence of resigning it,—the station to which we bring ourselves,—which forms a powerful opposition or contrast to what we might have assumed or previously possessed.

If our Saviour condescended, in the instance before us, it is manifest there must have been some previous elevation from which he descended—from which he passed to those acts which are here specified. It is necessary, in order to make out an example from our Saviour's case, to specify the particular circumstances here implied, which stand opposed to other circumstances: the elevation must come first, and the voluntary depression of himself must come afterwards. This is implied in the very nature of things. In all acts of condescension we must suppose the person who performs them to be acting in a manner perfectly voluntary; there must be no degradation in the case, nor any thing that occurs

by what we call chance or accident, nor yet by the usual arrangements of Providence: nothing that thus occurs can give any scope to the exercise of this disposition. Though the manner in which that depression may be borne may evince much patience and equanimity, and much of the proper spirit of christian resignation to the divine will, yet it cannot be called an act of condescension, if it is to be traced to the irresistible operations of divine grace, and much less still if it is the inevitable consequence of an irresistible law of nature. No one ever thought of praising the greatest sovereign on earth on the ground of his condescension in being a man, though this places him in the most essential particulars on a level with his subjects; a participation of human nature being a greater instance of equality than any circumstance that can produce inequality. No one, I say, would think of praising him on that account, because it is an effect of a law under which he was born, and which excludes his choice and volition.

But, not only is every instance of condescension supposed to involve the exercise of choice; but there must be no very forcible obligation, no such strong and palpable obligation to the act that expresses the condescension, as that the contrary of it would shock our moral feelings, would appear exceedingly unbecoming, and excite a great degree of moral disapprobation. Though condescension be a great ornament to the character of a christian, and springs from the principles of his religion, it is of a very different nature from the obligations of justice or even of humanity. It is of such a nature, indeed, that it is always supposed the not exercising it would not at the same time have destroyed all claim to virtuous and honourable conduct. If there be a forcible obligation to such sort of conduct, that conduct can never be entitled to the praise of eminent condescension. For example, nothing can be more plain than that it is the duty of every man to exercise humanity and strict justice towards all with whom he has to do. But, as the obligations to humanity, in cases of extreme distress, are

very forcible and strong, the neglect of them lays a person open to great blame; and the practice of them in some instances, in proportion to their great obligation, deprives the conduct of the title to high praise and commendation. In all cases the more palpable the obligation to conduct it, the less is there praiseworthy in complying with that obligation; and, on the other hand, the fainter the previous obligation is supposed to be, the stronger is the instance of virtue from attending to so comparatively feeble a sense of obligation.

Now, it is manifest, that if our Saviour be proposed as a pattern, it must be in some instance wonderfully condescending and humble, different from what might have been expected; that we must not merely look for what is virtuous and worthy, but for that which is so extraordinary and singular as to justify his being exhibited, in this part of his conduct, as our example. If he be proposed as an imitable model of condescension, it must be for the exercise of this virtue in a very eminent and extraordinary degree; for nothing else can justify his being held up as a pattern to all ages. If, while it was imitable in its kind, it had not surpassed all comparison in degree, it would then have excited a vicious competition,—it would have contradicted the very purpose for which it was produced, which was to set our Saviour inexpressibly high in our esteem, and excite us to emulate his conduct, as far as we are able, with the most entire consciousness that we can only make an imperfect approach to it. We must look, then, for some very extraordinary instance of condescension in our Lord, something which must strike all eyes, something which cannot be accounted for without supposing inexpressible love in the breast of the Saviour, and such an infinite compassion towards a lost world as must place him beyond all comparison, or even the power of being imitated, in this respect.

Now, there are two ways of interpreting this passage of scripture; and these remarks have been made to enable us to judge which is the best interpretation, which best corresponds with the intention of the sacred writer.

If there be any doubt about the meaning of the text separately taken, and it is capable of two distinct interpretations, that must be allowed to be the just one which best corresponds with the purpose for which the passage is produced; that which furnishes the argument for which the passage is brought, that which most illustrates the particular moral duty intended to be inculcated, must be confessed to be the true one, in opposition to that which does not inculcate that duty. It is allowed that an attention to the scope of a passage, and a consideration of the purpose for which it was written, is one of the most certain guides.

In interpreting this passage and in determining which is to be preferred of contrary interpretations, you must consider, not merely what meaning the words may bear, but which of the meanings proposed best corresponds with the intention of the inspired writer, by exhibiting our Saviour as a marvellous example of condescension. If there be a capacity of putting another construction on the words without any great force or violence to them, which, at the same time, does not exhibit a striking example of condescension,—one which deprives our Saviour of the place he here occupies as a pattern, on the supposition of which it becomes difficult to conceive of any condescension at all remarkable,—we are justified in setting aside that interpretation; not simply because it appears less natural in itself, but because it is quite unsuitable to the place, by destroying and invalidating the purpose for which it is brought.

I shall briefly propose to you the opposite interpretations which have been given to the passage before us.

First, then, let us take that of those who deny the divinity of Christ and the incarnation, and, of consequence, all the doctrines connected with them; their interpretation is as follows. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God;" that is, say they, being possessed of extraordinary miraculous powers, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" which they interpret, whether justly or not I shall not now inquire, *did not eagerly catch at, or was not eager to maintain*, the idea of any likeness to God, or equality with God,—"but made himself of no reputation;" that is, say they, made himself poor, or reduced himself to a state of poverty and meanness;—"and took upon him the form of a servant," which word they interpret *slave*, because, if the term servant stood, it is plain there could be no instance of condescension; they therefore consider him as subjecting himself to the abject state of a slave;—"and was made in the likeness of man," which say they, is like common men, not distinguishing himself by outward distinctions, but placing himself on a level with the meanest part of mankind;—"and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now this is the interpretation of those who would set aside the pre-existence of Christ in a state of majesty previously to his entrance into our world, and the obvious argument that hence results in favour of condescension from the preeminent dignity and glory of the Saviour. But let us consider whether this interpretation can possibly stand, consistently with the prerequisites we have before mentioned; whether the instances here adduced can possibly exhibit any striking example of condescension on the part of the Saviour. "Being in the form of God," on the supposition of its meaning his being possessed of miraculous powers, must be the only elevation he possessed above common men. This was his great distinction: but *this* he never laid aside. Here, therefore, instead of his conduct exhibiting a great example of condescension, he never came down from the station he occupied; he never lost it for a moment; for the exercise of miraculous powers continued, through the whole of his ministry, with increasing splendour and advantage. With respect to the translation I have adverted to, and which I shall not now combat, because the requisite criticisms appear to me very unfit for a popular assembly, let us take it that he did not eagerly catch at, or was not eager to maintain his equality and likeness to God, still I affirm that this is not an instance of *condescension*, because there is upon

creatures a forcible obligation not to contend for equality with God; and although it would be extremely criminal not to comply with it, yet there can be no high degree of virtue in abstaining from so atrocious a degree of guilt. For a subject to refrain from assuming the dignity of sovereign would excite no admiration; no one would think of highly praising his virtue because he did not raise a standard of rebellion against his sovereign. In proportion to the force of the obligation to abstain from such pretensions, in the same degree is such conduct considered only in a negative way; that is, as exempted from censure but not entitled highly to praise; in some cases, indeed, not at all. But the apostle brings it as a proof of condescension and humility, that Christ Jesus did not eagerly affect, as they say, an equality with God, or did not *catch at it*. How can that be an instance of *condescension*? The example must surpass, I apprehend, all human comprehension. "But made himself of no reputation," or, as the expression literally is, *emptied himself*. Emptied himself of what? And, it is added, "took upon him the form of a servant." We might suppose that his emptying himself must mean his divesting himself, as the expression signifies of something before possessed, of some distinction and glory before mentioned; and the only one, even in the esteem of our adversaries, is the form of God; but, upon their supposition, he did not empty himself of it all; he retained it; for, during his whole ministry, he exercised miraculous powers, and never more so than in the resurrection of Lazarus, which immediately preceded and accelerated his death. But, the text says, "he made himself of no reputation:" you may suppose that the writer is going to tell us for what reason he took upon himself the form of a servant. Here the "form of God" being mentioned before, it is manifest that the "form of a servant" is the intended antithesis. But, upon the supposition of Jesus Christ having no existence before he came into our world, there can be no interpretation given to it, unless we interpret *servant*, *slave*, and suppose that he degraded himself to the service of a common slave. But, if

Jesus Christ acted the part of a slave, or sustained the character of a slave, it must be either in relation to God, or to man. With respect to men, it is manifest he did not act the part of a slave, he never sustained that capacity at all, much less took upon him that character permanently; he never was in captivity: it was not then his relation to society. With respect to his heavenly Father, it cannot be supposed that it can be applied to his service to God; nothing can be so absurd: no service which the Divine Being can be supposed to prescribe to an accountable creature can be viewed in a degrading light. And where is there any example of the term slave signifying a very mean servant of God? Are not the angels themselves styled the servants of God? Does not Paul call himself the servant of God? Does not the angel in the Apocalypse style himself the fellow-servant of John? Would our very adversaries themselves so exceedingly disfigure the language of scripture as to style these the *slaves* of God? What can it then be for, but to answer a purpose perfectly palpable without being at the same time able to assign any just and proper meaning to the term? "And was made in the likeness of men:" here it is represented as an act of great condescension in our Saviour that he was made in the likeness of men; but how could he assume any other appearance than that of a man? how could he fail to appear in that character, with no other attribute belonging to him than that of a human being? "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now, these expressions evidently are intended to introduce a proof of our Saviour's great condescension and humility; but none of them answer this purpose in the least degree, but on the supposition of there being some previous dignity or rank from which he descended. There is no contrast, on the supposition of mere humanity, between this and the previous state; there is no forcible or palpable opposition between what he became and what he was; he always *was* a servant, he always *was* in the likeness of man, could be nothing but man;

and yet his being so is represented as a marvellous instance of condescension and humility in the Redeemer! On the supposition that Jesus Christ did not exist before he came into our world, the order of things is inverted; for the dignity of our Saviour, his elevation, came *afterwards*, upon this supposition, and his depression came *first:* he had no elevation of an earthly kind at all from which he could condescend, and he is the greatest example, if he were no more than man, of a person raising himself to great dignity and authority from the meanest and most abject beginning. No "form of God" was perceived in him in the commencement of his ministry. He possessed miraculous powers, it is true; but he possessed them to the end, and these he never lost. "My Father worketh, and I work." Upon the supposition of his mere humanity, the contrast is of a different kind; he is the most wonderful example of a person rising from the most obscure beginning, commencing in lowly circumstances, and ascending to grandeur.

But if we take the expressions according to their obvious and popular import, they afford the most striking illustration of the purpose of the apostle in exhibiting the condescension and humility of the Saviour. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Here the form of God and the form of a servant are contrasted with each other; and as the form of a servant is universally understood as acknowledging that he was a servant, what can we suppose the being in the form of God to mean, but that he was God; though that may not be its only meaning? He is said to have taken upon himself the form of a servant; here try the meaning of those who oppose the divinity of Christ, that he was not eager to catch at or to retain the likeness of God; and then, upon the supposition of his being the Son of God, possessing the divine nature, and uniting himself to mortal flesh, you will find that the latter perfectly corresponds with the

intention of the apostle. And his emptying himself, and taking upon him the form of a servant, is, indeed, a great instance of condescension, on the supposition of his being a Son; for there is a visible contrast between the being a son and a servant, which the apostle observes when he remarks, that "though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." There is also, upon this supposition, a plain meaning assigned to the whole, the words of existence differing from the words of assumption. "Who BEING in the form of God, MADE himself of no reputation, TOOK upon himself the form of a servant, was MADE in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled himself.*" For, here we have the state he formerly possessed expressed by the word BEING; and the word MADE, signifying that he became so by being made so; agreeably to what the apostle John says, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and further, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."—The same apostle, Paul, expresses the reason of his assuming a nature that did not belong to him, an inferior nature, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." But what possible contrast of this nature can be found, upon the supposition of Christ's mere humanity? Where was there any descent from the form of God? And why should that which could not be avoided, which was not voluntary, be expressed in the way it is—"Took upon himself the form of a servant," "humbled himself," and so on, when the very nature of things, the universal law of nature, rendered it impossible for him to be other than a mere man, and, consequently, a servant of the Most High God?

The doctrine of Christ's humiliation and incarnation is expressed in the most forcible manner, and worthy of our most attentive admiration and adoration. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself;" he *still* humbled himself. He was not satisfied with being

found in fashion as a man, which was a wonderful act of condescension: he was not satisfied with taking upon him the form of a servant; he not merely assumed a very low station in society; but he still humbled himself; he descended lower than the mere level of human nature required; he descended deeper and deeper, and was not contented till he had reached the very bottom of humiliation, till he "became obedient unto death." Nay, even that was not sufficient; there was one death more ignominious, more painful, more replete with agony and shame, than any other; and for the purpose, the glorious purpose, of his coming into our world, he selected that death, he determined to die that death, that very death; and made that his peculiar province in which he should appear, to the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and the conquest of the powers of darkness. "He became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*" It was from this cross, which was the lowest step to which he could possibly descend, that he arose to his crown; it was from thence that "he ascended up on high," that he was elevated to the right hand of God; that there might be exhibited in his person the most wonderful contrast of the original dignity which he laid aside, then of the scene of shame and suffering which he endured, and afterwards of the majesty and glory with which he invested the nature in which he suffered. He first descended from the throne to the cross; and then, in order that he might take up our nature with him, and make us partakers of his glory, he carried a portion of that nature from the cross to the throne, ascended into heaven, and from thence gives a portion of the benefits of it by the outpouring of his Spirit, by the preaching of the Gospel, and the saving of innumerable multitudes of them that believe; and all this in consonance with the purposes of God, whom it became, as the Great Legislator, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

There is only one expression more on which I shall make a remark; and that is, that it is not said he *became* a servant, or *became* a man: all this is *implied;*

the form of expression is different. Nor is it here asserted that he was God, though this is strongly implied. But it is thus expressed: "Who, being in the *form* of God, took upon him the *form* of a servant, and was made in the *likeness* of men." Though this plainly implies that Jesus Christ was God, yet the form of expression, no doubt, includes something more; it is intended to express a distinct idea from his being called God; and it appears to me to correspond exactly with the design of the apostle, for his design was to contrast our Lord's state at different times. He had assumed a form under the old dispensation wherein he appeared on various occasions, in various ways, or in different manifestations. When Joshua was about to enter on his war with the Canaanites, he observed a majestic and glorious personage standing over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as Captain of the hosts of the Lord am I come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." The same command God gave from the burning bush. And in Ezekiel you find, "one in the form of the Son of Man seated on a throne," with a sapphire firmament; and Jesus Christ is represented as distinct from the Father, presenting himself to the Father; so that he is said by the apostle Paul to have been tempted of the Israelites in the wilderness. He manifested himself, but he manifested himself in the form of God, with a majesty and glory suited to his work. Yet he laid aside that form; he divested himself of it, and took upon him the form of a servant, a human form; and not merely a human form, but he humbled himself still more, and became obedient unto death. He was *found* in fashion as a man: it was a wonderful discovery, an astonishing spectacle in the view of angels, that he who was in the form of God, and adored from eternity,

should be made in fashion as a man. But why is it not said that he WAS *a man*? For the same reason that the apostle wishes to dwell upon the *appearance* of our Saviour, not as excluding the reality, but as exemplifying his condescension. His being in the form of God did not prove that he was not God, but rather that he was God, and entitled to supreme honour. So, his assuming the form of a servant, and being in the likeness of man, does not prove that he was not man, but, on the contrary, includes it; at the same time including a manifestation of himself, agreeably to his design of purchasing the salvation of his people, and dying for the sins of the world by his sacrificing himself upon the cross. Besides, there is a peculiar propriety in these terms, *fashion* and *likeness* of man, though not intended to exclude his proper humanity; for there is a high and glorious distinction in the humanity of Christ as contrasted with every other: every other man is tainted with sin, and partakes of original corruption. But when the angel addressed the Virgin Mary, he said, "That holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." From that contagion which belongs to the human race he was exempted by a miraculous conception. Every other man possesses two parts, body and spirit; but this divine man, this "God-man," consisted of three component parts, a soul, a body, and that Eternal Word, or *Logos*, which formed also a part. He is represented as taking upon himself this form, and "being found in fashion as a man," exalted to the adoration of the universe, which beheld the greatest wonder that ever was exhibited to the world, in Him that was God becoming man; for if it be a wonder that God should *make* man, how much more astonishing that God should *become* man! "*Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name:" this is the reason. If you ask, how came a portion of human nature thus to be dignified? how came dust and ashes, (for such was a component part of the Saviour,) to be placed at the right hand of God, in the midst of the inaccessible glory? It was because in that nature he suf-

fered, that he was humbled and bowed to the cross; and this was the way in which he ascended to his crown. What an example is this of the force of humility and the efficacy of condescension; of the wonderful power which, according to the rules and laws of the kingdom of God, condescension, patient suffering, and lowliness have, in raising us to true dignity. But thus did the Saviour ascend to the crown.

Be it remembered, "He *became* obedient." There was, therefore, no necessity to obey at all. But he assumed, voluntarily, a nature which made him capable of suffering: and he obeyed in that nature even unto death, "the death of the cross;" in order that he might make it becoming the character of God, as a Moral Governor, to grant pardon to a whole race of apostate and guilty, but believing and penitent, creatures.

And yet we are told that Christ is not to be called a Saviour exclusively; we are told that Paul, and Peter, and others, shared in the glory of saving mankind. Nay, we are told that all this argument of the apostle in the text, conclusive as it is, both from the words and phrases which are employed, and from the disposition in the mind of Christ which the whole of the reasoning implies,—that all this, instead of proving the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, proves nothing of the kind. Indeed, farther, the leader of the unitarians in the present day declares that no words can ever be clear enough to prove to him that Christ is God; and that if he should find any such words in the scripture, they would only serve to weaken the evidence of the truth of the christian revelation, and would not convince him that the statement was true. With such men we can have no communion. Such a spirit shuts up all the avenues to truth and conviction; nay, it is the height of arrogance and practical infidelity in a creature like man. For it not only leads to error,—dangerous, fatal, destructive error, growing out of a spirit diametrically opposite to that inculcated in the text,—but it goes to the frightful length of setting itself above revelation; of limiting the wisdom of the Infinite Mind; by affirming that the revealed de-

clarations, concerning the incomprehensible God, cannot be true; thus subverting the whole foundation of faith.

Be careful then, my brethren, that "the same mind be in *you* which was also in Christ Jesus." If you wish to be great in the kingdom of God, go in the same path. If you wish to possess true dignity, lower yourself. If you wish to reign with him, you must also suffer with him: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. We cannot follow the Saviour without pursuing the same path; we must tread in the same steps; "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me;" and "Where I am, there shall also my servants be;" for "He that honoureth me, him will my Father honour."

This wonderful mystery of our redemption is of the most practical tendency; not only because it exhibits such affecting views of the evil of sin, and of the price of our redemption, but because it shows the connexion between humility and true dignity. The glory of the cross consists in this—that it is the way to the crown. The christian religion is distinguished from all others, by turning men's minds from aspiring to dignity here, inducing them to forego their own good, to cast away their lives, to make shipwreck of all but faith, to give up themselves to God's will entirely, to follow wherever the Saviour leads, and to press into the celestial kingdom through agonies, and crosses, and torments—through every possible obstacle. This is the way the Saviour went, and it is in this way we must expect to be partakers of his glory. "Let *this* mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

The time forbids my enlarging upon this subject, by pressing the practical conclusion from it in its different branches; but I cannot close without urging upon all, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is one of the first principles of our religion, one of the elementary truths of christianity, that "He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." "Let the same mind be in

you."—You who are possessed of property, devote *that* in the way it becomes the servants of so divine a Master. Consider the use *he* would have made of that portion of this world's good, which he declined as an example of patience and humility. Consider to what purpose *he* employed his heavenly powers; and to the same purpose employ your natural advantages and civil resources. When did he employ that word, which commanded angels and devils, and subdued the very elements of nature, for the purposes of ostentation? When were his words any thing but spirit and life? When did they operate to any purpose but to communicate health to the dying, purity to the guilty, pardon to the sinful, and salvation and benefits to all around him? "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You possess a portion of this world's good; if you are true christians, you will consider this as belonging to your Lord, as belonging to the poor of his people, as belonging to the world—to all but yourselves, and will consider all as having a much greater property in it, morally considered, than yourselves; you will regard yourselves as the stewards of God, and the most unjust persons (though not amenable to any human tribunal, but to your Saviour and your Lord) if you employ them to any other purposes than those of beneficence. If you deem it peculiarly honourable to die rich, and to leave estates afterwards to your children, to have them "called by your own name," that name will be a name of infamy. No, my brethren, be assured such a mistaken course will *cancel* your name, will blot it out of the Lamb's book of life for ever. Let, then, "the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And those who are elevated in rank; let them not use it merely for the purpose of levying homage from men, of making a vain show, of appearing in artificial splendour. And those who are possessed of influence; let them use it also for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. Never was any one so exalted as our Saviour, and never did any one make such a use of his exaltation. He shrouded it in the deep veil of humanity, he concealed

it from the view of the world. None but the piercing eye of faith, illuminated by the Spirit of God, could behold it. The world knew him not. "*We* beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Do *you* then, my brethren, employ your influence in that manner. Never make it the means of keeping at a distance from you the poor, the distressed, and the afflicted. "Mind not high things. but condescend to men of low estate." Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Do not dwell on the contemplation of your own greatness; do not separate yourselves from your fellow-creatures. Do not suffer yourselves to be hedged in and fenced round from them, by the riches of this world; but communicate them to others, and pray for the blessing of God upon the right use of them, that they may turn to incorruptible riches and righteousness; that these perishing riches and this evil mammon may not seduce you from the right way to the everlasting mansions. If you are not faithful over a little, how shall you be faithful over much? and if you are not faithful to that which is the property of God, who lends it to you for a time, but gives to none a discretionary use of it, how shall he give you "that crown of righteousness that fadeth not away;" that glory which will be a part of your nature, which will satisfy your souls, and make you great, and happy, and blessed, to all eternity?

"Let nothing be done," saith the apostle, "through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Let men learn of Jesus Christ that humility which disposed him to behave as if he had been the lowest and meanest of all. Our blessed Saviour was not unconscious of his high dignity, but he knew that it was important to exhibit *the spirit* of his religion in great humility. When he knew that he was shortly to go to his Father, and that, "the Father had given all things into his hands, then he took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet." When he was about to take possession of universal empire, and heaven, earth, and hell, were to be submitted to him,—when he knew that he was just about to be crowned with immortal glory, after he had sustained the divine frown for the salvation of men, even "*then* he took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet, saying, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; if I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet,"—to condescend to the lowest office of christian beneficence and love.

Again, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," in his entrance into the world: consider with what sympathy he regarded mankind, and what drew him from his exalted seat of majesty on high. How did he look upon a distant race far removed from him, and compassionate their misery! how did he, as it were, for a season annihilate himself! how did he take their curse upon him, and invest himself with their nature! he looked upon them with unutterable and tender compassion: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You live among men dead in trespasses and sins; you see nations innumerable sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Consider what compassion actuated the Saviour's breast in coming down from heaven to pay the price of our redemption, to make peace with God, and bring in everlasting righteousness. What compassion touched his holy and beneficent mind, inducing him to die a sacrifice for the sins of his people! Do you have the same mind; compassionate the distant and miserable children of men involved in darkness. Carry your eyes to the remotest borders of the earth; and be not satisfied until the whole earth "is full of the knowledge of the Lord," till all men have seen the salvation of God. Let no distance of place, no difference of circumstances, prevent your exerting yourselves to diffuse the knowledge of Him "who made himself of no reputation." Let nothing prevent your feeling a participation of the common nature. God has provided for sympathy by making you "of one blood;" so that you must act contrary to the laws of na-

ture if you do not sympathize with your fellow-creatures. "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" then will the religion of Christ extend itself far and wide. Let this mind distinguish the followers of Christ; and all men will confess that God is among you of a truth. You will be all of one heart and one mind; you will be actuated by such a desire as will render you beneficial to all your fellow-creatures, as will make you the "light of the world," and the "salt of the earth." Then would iniquity stop its mouth, and so would you confound infidelity and impiety. Seriously study the doctrine of the cross, place yourselves there, consider what are the morals of the cross; consider what are the dispositions the cross inculcates; what is the influence of the fact that you are purchased, redeemed, and, by his Spirit, prepared for a seat at the right hand of God; what the everlasting advantages which accrue from being purchased by such blood, saved by such humility; what the doctrines of the Saviour's incarnation, sacrifice, and ascent to heaven, inculcate on christian hearts. It opens a fountain of love, of wonderful and inexhaustible compassion: and it is at that fountain of love we should study: for we shall never be truly happy till we *do* study the spirit of our religion at the foot of the cross. We should enter more deeply into the dying love of Christ, that we may "comprehend, with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, of that love which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God."

Finally, my brethren, we see here the great and intimate connexion between the practical principles of religion, and the great doctrines of christianity. Take away the incarnation of our Lord, and his sacrifice upon the cross, and these sublime and glorious truths lose all their meaning: this great example dwindles into nothing, if we lose sight of Christ's dignity, glory, and humility. It is this which renders his sacrifice of infinite value. It is this which renders his cross so inexpressibly awful and so deeply interesting. It is this which makes it so infinitely precious to his people. The cross

of Jesus Christ is the appropriate, the appointed rendezvous of heaven and earth;* the meeting-place between God and the sinner: thus the principles of the cross become the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Deprive Jesus Christ of his dignity, deprive his person of divinity and pre-existence as the Son of God, and all these momentous truths dwindle into inexpressible futilities. Doctrines meant to warm and kindle our hearts fill us with perplexity. When we look for a glorious mystery, we find nothing but the obscurity and perplexity that make men rack their invention to find out the meaning of those passages which it is plain the apostle poured forth in a stream of exquisite affection and delight.

But "we have not so learned Christ:" Hold fast the cross of Christ. You who are not acquainted with the christian religion, come to Jesus Christ by faith; cast yourselves upon the dying love of the Saviour; receive him by faith. And those of you who *have* received the Saviour, study him more and more; impress still more and more upon your minds the lessons which Christ crucified teaches. This is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation; and by means of this only shall we grow up into conformity to our blessed Lord and Saviour: which God grant, of his infinite mercy. Amen.

V.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

[PREACHED AT KETTERING, IN JUNE, 1813.]

PSALM cxlv. 11—"*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.*"†

THE absolute dominion of God is a subject worthy to be celebrated by all creatures; it is the frequent theme

* See Vol. V. pp. 216—221. ED.

† Printed from the notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford. For Mr. Hall's own notes, see Vol. V. pp. 221—227.

of praise in the Scriptures, which were dictated by the Holy Ghost.

But there is another kingdom which God has intrusted to the hands of his well-beloved Son—the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the subject of the most exalted praise, and of the most glorious prophecies of the Old Testament, as well as of all the histories, doctrines, and revelations of the New Testament. This is styled the kingdom of heaven, and of God: it is the kingdom which the God of heaven has set up among men upon the earth. It is contrasted with the kingdom of the power of darkness; and its subjects are described as being translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into "the kingdom of God's dear Son,"* which is a kingdom of "marvellous light."

Whether the Psalm before us is designed, in particular, to celebrate this dispensation of the Son of God, I shall not now inquire: but as the kingdom of Christ is so conspicuous an object in both Testaments and is the only one among men by whose government their happiness can be secured, it cannot be improper from the words before us, to direct your attention, on the present occasion, to some particulars relating to the nature, extent, and durability of its glory.

I. The glory of this kingdom is manifested in its origin. It had its origin in infinite mercy and grace. It was the object of the divine and eternal purposes of the Father; an object to which all other purposes were subservient. It entered into the councils of the Eternal before the foundation of the world was laid. It was a grand design, intended to include the reign of God over the mind and heart of man; a purpose to establish a kingdom, the subjects of which should be raised to be partakers of the same nature as their Sovereign.

In order to establish this kingdom, it was necessary that the Son of God should become incarnate; the "Mighty God" must be a "child born unto us," that he might have the "government laid upon his shoulders,"

* Colos. i. 13

and be the "Prince of Peace" to his redeemed people. God purposed to have his tabernacle among men, and to be their God; but this he could not do consistently with his truth and holiness, till an atonement was made to his law in the death of the person of his Son. The institution of sacrifices under the law intimated that "without the shedding of blood there was no remission;"* their insufficiency evidenced the necessity of a sacrifice of transcendent value; and this was often indicated by the prophets: "Then said he, Sacrifices and offerings thou didst not desire; lo, I come to do thy will, O God."† Thus the foundation of the kingdom was laid in the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God; a foundation proportionate to the grandeur and beauty of the edifice that was to be erected.

The doctrines of the gospel were, and are, the grand instruments in the hand of the Lord Jesus for bringing souls into subjection to his sceptre. The King must ride forth conquering and to conquer; all his subjects must be rescued and subdued: but what a battle is that in which he engages! "Every battle among men is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood," but this is "with burning and with fire." The warfare is entirely spiritual; it is carried on by the light of truth and the burning of conviction. The mere testimony of the gospel, in the mouth of the witnesses, produced effects more wonderful than any that were ever produced by the violence of the sword: by this the powers of darkness were shaken, their votaries confounded, their temples deserted, and their oracles silenced. Heavenly truth combated with sophistry and error, and gained a decisive victory, though her opponents were armed with all the persecuting powers of the kingdoms of this world. The Psalmist, foreseeing the contest, said, long since, "Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most Mighty, and in thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness."‡ These have had no

* Heb. ix. 22. † Psalm xl. 6—8.
‡ Psalm xlv. 3, 4.

share in the extension of human dominion, but were the principal instruments that were used in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. To these, in his hand, and by his Spirit, the success of the gospel is to be ascribed: by these, his people became a "willing people in the day of his power;" a conquered, yet a willing people: led captive, yet obedient. This is a glorious manner of raising a kingdom, worthy of him who is a spirit, and who reigns by spiritual and intellectual means in the hearts of his people. Could we trace the means by which God has established his empire, it would fill our minds with admiration, and our lips with praise: then should we "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

II. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifested in the manner and spirit of its administration.

The last words of David describe the manner of administering this government;—"The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."*

The most essential quality in the administration of any government is justice; and justice is most conspicuous in this administration. The Sovereign confers no benefits on his friends, and inflicts no punishments on his enemies, but what are consistent with righteousness. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."† He will render to each of his subjects, not *for* their works, yet, *according*

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—4. † Isaiah xi. 4, 5.

to their works. He establishes his holy law as the rule of their conduct, and makes use of such motives to excite them to holy and spiritual obedience as are suitable to their nature, both as rational and as fallen creatures. As the law was first employed, so it is still used for conviction, for alarming the consciences even of the redeemed and the regenerate, and to excite to repentance and to renewed exercises of reformation.

The administration of this kingdom is also benign and gracious—it is indeed a kingdom of grace. The throne is a throne of grace, and the sceptre is a sceptre of grace. He revealeth his grace, which is his glory; and thus he captivates the hearts of his people. He, in his great kindness, invites to him all that are athirst, all that are "weary and heavy laden,"* and assures them that they shall find rest and refreshment. "He delivers the poor when he cries, the needy, and him that hath no helper." He is the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, in his holy habitation. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst," he graciously says, "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."†

In earthly kingdoms, the subjects are governed by general laws, which must necessarily be very inadequate to the variety of cases and occurrences. It is impossible that the multiplicity of actions, and all their individual shades, should be at all times considered and distinguished: hence has arisen the proverb, "*Summum jus, summa injuria.*" But our King is intimately acquainted with all hearts, and, being present in all places, he can apply his acts to individual examples, and appropriate smiles and frowns to each, as if there were no other beings that participated in his attention. In human administrations, the law extends only to outward acts; it

* Matt. xi. 28. † Isaiah xli. 17, 18.

relates only to objects of sense; insomuch that a pure spirit, disengaged from the body, is free from its sanction: but the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual one—it extends to the heart; it relates not to meats and drinks, but it is a kingdom that is "within you,"* and relates to "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."† It is founded on communion with Christ: by his Spirit Christ lives in his members; their souls, whether in the body or out of the body, are always in his hands; he is Lord, both of the dead and the living; he adjusts himself to all cases, through every part of his vast empire. In earthly kingdoms, the utmost that can be done is, to lay down rules, to prescribe laws, and to sanction by rewards or penalties; but Jesus Christ can write his laws on the hearts of his people. "They are engraven, not on stone, but on fleshly tables."‡ He knows how to speak to the heart; and "they know his voice, and follow him; but a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger."§

It is justly considered a high excellency in a ruler, that he is disinterested, that he pursues no interest of his own, apart from the general good of the empire: this is the very flower of royalty; and those who have thus distinguished themselves have been justly considered as the greatest benefactors of mankind; they have been obeyed and loved while they lived, and foolishly idolized and worshipped when they died. But never was any one so disinterested as the King of Zion, who laid down his life for his people, while they were yet enemies. He wields the sceptre of universal dominion: he chains death and hell, quells the devils, and overrules all things for the good of his church. Though he sits at the right hand of God, he could not enjoy even that station were it to continue a solitary one. "Father," says he, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."‖ "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that

* Luke xvii. 21. † Rom. xiv. 17. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 3.
§ John x. 4, 5. ‖ John xvii. 24.

where I am, there ye may be also."* He blends the deepest condescension with the highest majesty. He is a lion against the enemies of his people, but to them he appears as a "lamb in the midst of the throne." The whole of his history is a history of the sacrifice of selfish feelings. The glory of the Father, and the good of man; these engaged his heart, these brought him from heaven, these regulated all his actions and sufferings; and he rested not till he could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."† Well may we "speak," then, "of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

III. The glory of the kingdom of Christ appears in the character of his subjects.

The character of a people for greatness and for virtue constitutes part of the glory of any kingdom; and it must not be omitted here. The Divine Ruler will derive much of his glory from the change that he has wrought in his people. "This people have I formed for myself," says he; "they shall show forth my praise."‡ As this change is derived from above, there is no foundation for boasting, yet the change is not the less real: it is the communication of the Saviour's image and spirit: and, when he comes, he will "be glorified in his saints."

I cannot enter largely into a description of the subjects of this kingdom, nor is it necessary; but a few observations may be made, with propriety and advantage.

1. These subjects are enlightened: they have just conceptions of things; they are delivered out of darkness, which envelopes the rest of mankind, as the children of Israel had light in the land of Goshen when the habitations of the Egytians were in darkness. They see things as they are: they see them, in some measure, as they are seen by Jesus Christ, the "true Light;" they form right estimates of objects, as they are holy or sinful, temporal or eternal; they reckon that all worldly treasures and delights are nothing and

* John xiv. 3. † John xvii. 4. ‡ Isaiah xliii. 21.

vanity, when compared with the spiritual and everlasting riches and pleasures of Christ and his kingdom.

2. The subjects of this kingdom are renewed: the Spirit of God changes their heart; they are made, imperfectly, yet truly holy; they have a principle in them that aims at perfection; their characters are mixed, but the best part struggles against the worst, and will finally triumph. It is in this kindom that patience, purity, humility, faith, and love to God and men, reside. Whatever of true holiness is to be found on earth, here you must find it; "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."* But these are renewed after the image of God: there is something divine impressed upon their characters; they have a principle in them that comes from God and leads to God, and inspires their souls with earnest longings after him. "My soul followeth hard after God."† "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."‡ They have been reclaimed from their revolt, and are truly loyal; they are "called, chosen, and faithful." From their wanderings they have "returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls;" they lament that they ever were his enemies, that they ever lived at a distance from him; and it is now their sincere desire to obey him while they live, and to breathe out their souls in his service.

3. The subjects of this kingdom have in them a preparation for perfect blessedness. They that do not belong to Christ are disqualified for heaven, but those that belong to him have the elementary preparation for that blissful state; they have that which renders them meet "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." They are not entirely cured, it is true, of all the infection of sin; the venom of the "old serpent" is not expelled: but they are under a restorative process; they are under the method of cure; they are taking the medicine which is of sovereign efficacy. All the love and joy that glow with celestial fervour before the throne of

* 1 John v. 19. † Psalm lxiii. 6 ‡ Psalm lxxiii. 25.

the Heavenly Majesty, is only the consummation of seeds like those which are sown in the hearts of believers: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."* They are sown in their hearts: and when that which is sown, or is to be sown, shall be matured, Jesus Christ will present unto himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."† And what a spectacle will this be! how will the saints themselves be astonished at their attainments! It will require an eternity to know ourselves, much more to know the Fountain whence all these beauties and glories have been derived. Then, indeed, shall we "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

IV. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifest in the privileges that are attached to it.

The privileges are transcendently great, far beyond our comprehension. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him;"‡ but the Spirit of God, which searcheth all things, in some measure manifests them to us by his word, and gives us a taste for them in our experience.

1. Peace is a peculiar blessing of this kingdom. The Ruler is called, "The Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his kingdom and peace, there shall be no end. This begins in reconciliation with God; the healing of the great breach which sin has made. With respect to his people, the great controversy which has opposed earth to heaven is at an end: they are reconciled, free from condemnation, delivered from that cloud of wrath which overhangs the rest of the world; they are justified by faith, and therefore have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The consequence of peace with God is peace with one another; a spirit which unites men in a wonderful manner to their fellow-creatures, and especially to their fellow-christians. This, when it is diffused, will produce peace among all families and all

* Psalm xcvii. 11. † Ephes. v. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

nations; it will be an antidote against all the animosities and discords that have prevailed in the world.

2. The dignity of the subjects of this kingdom is another privilege. Is it considered an honour for a king to have a large train of nobles, who can trace their origin through a long line of progenitors? Are these the strength of the throne? What a noble race are the subjects of Christ's kingdom! To "as many as receive him, he gives the power to become the sons of God."* This is the highest of all titles. Their earthly descent is not noticed; it doth not yet appear what they shall be:" but this is their nobility—"Now are ye the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "What manner of love is this which the Father hath bestowed upon us!" All these sons shall be advanced to the kingdom; they shall every one of them be kings and priests unto God, and unite together in ascribing glory, and honour, and praise, and power, unto Him who redeemed them, and conferred this honour upon them. They shall have dominion over their sins, over the world, and over Satan, who shall be "bruised under their feet shortly." They will be invested with a holy office, reigning under Christ, and for his service and glory, for ever.

3. Immortality shall be the blessing of this kingdom: the subjects shall partake of endless life; a life that shall never be extinguished. In the Scriptures we read, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus shall never die. The fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but he that eateth of the bread that I shall give him shall never die.†" He that keepeth the sayings of Christ "shall not taste of death." Death, in the scripture sense, includes that separation from God which begins in spiritual and is completed in eternal death;‡ this is that of which believers cannot taste. They receive in

* John i. 12. † John vi. 58.

‡ See pp. 99—102, of "Exegetical Essays on several Words relating to Future Punishment," by Professor Stuart, of Andover, United States; a work in which philological acumen and research are finely blended with sound discrimination and a genuine love of truth.—Ed.

them the embryo of eternal life: the spiritual life rises up into life eternal, and will be displayed in its perfection in the world of glory. As subjects of Christ's kingdom, his servants are immortal; whatever may affect their frail bodies, nothing can separate them from the love of Christ.

What an important blessing is the possession of eternal life and the resurrection of the dead! These terms include everlasting felicity in the presence of God; a privilege ineffable and invaluable, surpassing our apprehension, or any comparison that can be made. To enjoy the smallest portion of this blessing, is to be superior to all the greatness of the present state: the least in the kingdom of heaven is higher than the most exalted of the rulers and the philosophers of the world. We shall shortly see and feel this to be the true representation of the subject. Wicked men shall see it to be so, when, between them and the righteous, "there is a great gulf fixed;" good men will find it to be so, and their spirits will even fail within them, when they behold the order of the court of heaven, and the majesty of the kingdom.

These blessings which I have mentioned, will not only be put within the reach, but made to be the possession, of the subjects of the kingdom of heaven.

The benefits that result from well-regulated governments on earth are generally such as restrain from the pursuits of evil, prevent interference with others, remove obstructions, and leave open various avenues to the prosperity of individuals. Each subject must pursue his own course, and make his own fortune: but in this, the spiritual kingdom, positive blessings are conveyed. "The Lord will be to his people a place of broad rivers and streams."* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."† He not only subdues our enemies, but delivers us from our trials; while he himself becomes a source of satisfying

* Isaiah xxxiii. 21. † 1 Pet. i. 3.

good. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."* "I give unto them eternal life."†

I might mention some other properties of this kingdom, which, though they do not enter into the essence of it, are very important.

It is a growing kingdom. At first it was small, but it had in it an expansive power: it was "a little stone hewn out of a mountain without hands," but it shall become "a great mountain, and fill all the earth." It has grown, and is growing; "and of its increase there shall be no end."‡ "He must increase; he shall reign until all things are put under him." He goes on "conquering and to conquer:" the last enemy shall be overcome and be bound to the wheels of his chariot. The Scriptures are much occupied in these things. The prophets seemed to think as much of missions, their labours, and their successes, as we do, and often more intensely: they employed the most glowing language, and the sublimest strains, in their predictions of the glory of Messiah's kingdom in the latter day; they snatched from earth and heaven, from the sun, the moon, and the stars, the fairest and grandest images, to represent the state of the church at that desired period; levying a tribute upon universal nature, and making all things contribute to illustrate, as they will in reality contribute to advance, this kingdom.

This is a subject, then, my brethren, which can never be exhausted; you may speak of it through eternity! Open all your hearts, utter the most astonishing eloquence, call forth the host of angels to assist you in celestial songs, and still fresh views will burst upon your minds: you will appear for ever only to be at the beginning of the theme, only to be standing upon the borders of Immanuel's land; you will be called upon perpetually to rejoice, and again to rejoice, while you "speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

In connexion with those qualities which I have mentioned, the *perpetuity* of this kingdom must endear it, above all things, to a good man: this indeed crowns the whole. It is a perpetual kingdom; it shall never be removed; it shall never, *never* be taken away to be given to any other people; but the saints of the Most High shall continually possess it. It shall rise upon the ruins of all other dominions, and shall itself never be subverted.

* John xiv. 27. † John x. 28. ‡ Isaiah ix. 7

Let us then rejoice at the tokens which we can trace of God's purpose to extend this kingdom. Our eyes have seen great and wonderful things: God is doing much for his church; we have advantages beyond any of our predecessors. Such a period as the present has not been witnessed since the days of the apostles: all events seem to be pointing to the final issue; and this should reconcile us to live in a time of desolation. In the midst of the darkness that surrounds us, a bright point is visible that forebodes the dawn of a brighter day. God is overturning, overturning; but it is to prepare the way for *his* coming "whose right it is, and who shall reign for ever."

The kingdoms of this world are changing and falling to ruin. Let us not be dismayed at this; they are made of changeable materials. We ought not to wonder if the mortal dies, and if the changeable changes; but ever to rejoice that we receive "a kingdom which cannot be moved."* Let us have grace, while we see these things, "to serve the Lord acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

This kingdom, my brethren, will advance in the world when we have quitted it for ever. It is a kingdom, at present, consisting of two parts; there is an upper and a lower province: in the lower province the subjects are required to struggle and fight; when called hence, they shall triumph. Then shall we know what is meant by the glory of this kingdom, when "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes," and when "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us to

* Heb. xii. 28.

living fountains of water;"* when we shall "rejoice before the throne, and reign for ever and ever."†

Let us, while we live here, sincerely pray and labour for the advancement and glorious increase of this kingdom, which embraces all the elements of purity and happiness. "This is all our salvation," and should be all our desire. Beyond this there is nothing to be hoped for; without this, there is nothing on earth that can render the prospect of death tolerable, or life worth possessing.

Finally, then, let us look to ourselves, that, while we hear these things, we may possess a personal interest in this glorious and happy kingdom. "The law and the prophets were until John;" but now is the kingdom of heaven; and let every man be pressing into it. Press into it—strive to enter. Strive as in an agony: "for many shall strive" imperfectly, "and shall not be able." Let it be your determination, by the aid of promised grace, to surmount every difficulty. Press into the kingdom: for behind thee is the wrath and curse of Almighty God; but within is a place of safety, of peace, and joy. Put your feet within the limits of this kingdom, and it will be as one of the cities of refuge to the men that were pursued by the avengers of blood; and the further you penetrate, the more will your peace and joy be promoted.

To be within this kingdom—how infinitely important! Why are there, then, any of you that are not earnestly seeking it? If you have not felt a concern about it before, what are your present thoughts? Is what we have advanced all imagination? Is it only a *fancied* empire that has been represented to you? Is there such a kingdom among men? Have you heard of it, have you seen it? And is the Saviour, the Lord of his church, wooing your souls? Is he asking leave to come in? Does he say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in?"‡ Open then the door, and let the King of Glory come in.

* Rev. vii. 17. † Rev. vii. 9, 15. ‡ Rev. iii. 20.

If he visits you, it is that he may reign in you; and then he will bless you with his salvation. There is no one wise who does not yield to the Saviour; all are fools who are not either rejoicing in the evidence that they are in this kingdom, or earnestly desirous of it. Be not content that this kingdom should appear before you, and invite your attention for a time, and then vanish away for ever; say not, I shall see it, but not for myself. "Oh, thou that art exalted to heaven, take heed lest thou be thrust down to hell!" The kingdom of God indeed is come nigh unto you; it is nigh you in the gospel, it is nigh you in the efforts of the present time, it is nigh you in the exertions and the faithful endeavours of your ministers, it is nigh you in every sermon you hear, and in every ordinance you attend. It is nigh you; and you will never get quit of this thought: it will be as a sharp arrow that will drink up your spirits to all eternity. When this glorious kingdom is far from you, when between you and the blessed subjects of it "there is a great gulf fixed,"* you will for ever cry, Once it was nigh me; every sabbath it was nigh me; every day it was nigh me; for months and years together it was nigh me; but I refused it; I thrust it from me; I would have none of the Saviour's counsel, I rejected his reproof; and now—it is past; it is gone, it is infinitely distant from me; the things of the kingdom are for ever hidden from my eyes! Beware, lest that come upon you which is written; "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."† "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."‡

* Luke xvi. 26. † Acts xiii. 40, 41. ‡ Psalm ii. 12.

VI.

GOD'S WAYS, THOUGH OFTEN INSCRUTABLE, ARE RIGHTEOUS AND JUST.*

[PREACHED AT LUTON, MAY, 1815.]

PSALM XCVII. 2.—*Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

THIS Psalm commences with a statement of the most important doctrine of religion; a doctrine which is the foundation of all serious piety;—that of the rule and dominion of God over his creatures. It then calls to rejoicing in that great truth. In every time of trouble this is the Christian's consolation; and it is his chief joy in his best moments. He who is "above all," continually conducts the machine of providence, and superintends all things in every part of the universe. This is the unfailing source of comfort to a good man,—"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."

In the text we have a concession made, perfectly consistent with the great truth before propounded: "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne." Two propositions are contained in this text, to which I now propose calling your attention.

I. "Clouds and darkness are round about God."

II. "Righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne."

I. "Clouds and darkness are round about God." The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded: thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times, are the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Samuel Hillyard.

cloud had a dark and a bright side, and was a symbol of the divine presence: thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day.* When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, "because the glory of the Lord filled the house."† When God descended upon Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount."‡ When our Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, "a bright cloud overshadowed them," from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."§ And Peter, who was present there, afterwards referring to this fact, says, that the voice proceeded "from the excellent glory."‖ Thus, in all the symbols of the divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of providence: in a moral and figurative sense we may say, that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of divine power and wisdom.

Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, though "righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne."

In the present state of the affairs of the nations we see the interference of Divine Providence; and yet it is surrounded with clouds and darkness. Never was the hand of God more conspicuous, yet never were men less able to penetrate and comprehend his deep and unfathomable designs.

As this is the divine method of government with

* Exod. xiv. 19, 20. † 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.
‡ Exod. xix. 16, 18, 20. § Matt. xvii. 5. ‖ 2 Pet. i. 17.

respect to affairs of a larger scale, so it is also in instances of a smaller and inferior kind; it is thus in the removal of the most eminent, holy, and useful characters, that while we acknowledge the hand of God, we say, "clouds and darkness are round about him." Such removals we have recently experienced: "The fathers, where are they; and the prophets do they live for ever?" No. Such as seemed most necessary in the church, the pillars of the temple, are removed, and many are trembling for the ark of God. We are taught to "be still, and know that he is God," since "what we know not now we shall know hereafter:" and we feel it necessary, in our obscurity and distress, to refer to the great principles of his government, "Judgement and righteousness are the habitation of his throne."

The course of events has not been such as might have been expected from the known character of God. If we look into the book of history we shall perceive that there is much disorder in earthly scenes, much confusion in the affairs of men; and was this to be expected from a God of order and wisdom? We know that he is a Being of infinite mercy, that out of his infinite fulness he loves to communicate happiness to his creatures; yet we see them oppressed with calamity, surrounded by miseries; and we find that man has, in all ages and in all stations, been "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Again, we know that God, in his great love to our world, has devised a plan to raise men to happiness and glory; his regard to this plan, and the objects of it, appear in all the doctrines of revelation, in all the miracles by which they are supported, and in all the prophecies and glorious things that are spoken concerning the church, by which our expectations have been so greatly raised. But how have these expectations fallen short of their accomplishment; what a small part of the world is enlightened by the beams of the "Sun of Righteousness;" how narrow are the limits of the gospel; how little has been done by christianity, compared with what might have been anticipated from the divine principles,

the character of the Author, and from the interest it possesses in the heart of God. We have, as yet, wrought almost no deliverance in the earth; Paganism yet strikes deep its roots in various lands; Mahometanism has plucked up the "good seed of the kingdom" in countries where that seed brought forth fruit abundantly; even in what is called Christendom, how little have the known and blessed effects of the gospel been manifested. Jesus Christ came to reconcile all who receive him into one family; to make, of many, one body; to compose discords, to allay violent passions and animosities, to make wars to cease, and to give peace, and love, and harmony, to his followers; but those called christians have been inflamed and armed against each other. From the beginning, dangerous errors have produced noxious effects; the "mystery of iniquity" began to work; those who "named the name of Christ" have inflicted greater barbarities upon one another, under the influence of superstition and bigotry, than their fathers had suffered from their pagan persecutors. The woman that "sat upon the scarlet-coloured beast" is indeed "full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns;" she is still arrayed in "purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abomination and filthiness, and fornication; and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth. And I saw," says the apostle, "the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."* And what could be less expected, what more surprising, than that christianity should occasion the discovery of so much vileness? Nay, where genuine christianity is taught, how small, how slow, has been its progress; how few seem to be converted to God, compared with those who are enemies in heart to him, and to the kingdom to which they profess to belong! Instead of christians

* Rev. xvii. 4–6.

being of one heart and of one mind, they are armed with malice and envy against each other on account of some differences of sentiment and judgement; even persons of real piety give way to prejudice and party zeal, which prevent, in a great measure, the operation and effect of pure christianity. Thus this blessed system of religion seems to have been the occasion of more feuds and strifes among its professors than any other interest has produced since the world began. Look at the state of the world; see nations professing the name of Christ, rushing into hostilities, building all their hopes of future peace upon the success of their plans of bloodshed and carnage, breathing defiance and slaughter in their words, and displaying them in their enraged countenances. When will the end of these things be? Were it not for the sure word of prophecy, we might be ready to imagine "God had made all men in vain." A great part of the world is no better than if Christ had never come to save mankind, and the gospel had never been proclaimed. Some who hear it are even the worse for what they hear; for where it is not "a savour of life unto life," it is "a savour of death unto death."

I might expatiate still more on this portion of the text; but sufficient has been said to prove that things have not been according to expectations founded on the known character of God, but that "clouds and darkness are round about him."

We proceed, then, to the second class of remarks, suggested by the passage before us.

II. "Judgement and righteousness are the habitation of his throne."

Righteousness is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature; if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude.

Judgement is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions; it is a developement of his rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all

things are directed to some vast and important end. Judgement implies measure and equity in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the divine conduct is equitable, regulated by the utmost rectitude; every thing is directed by a judgement that cannot err.

Thus "Righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne." The throne of God is built, and stands firm, upon these principles; they are the place, the basis, and the foundation of his throne. Though the clouds cannot be dispelled, though there is thick darkness round about, through which our eyes cannot penetrate; yet there are principles discernible through the light of revelation, and by the eye of faith, which may serve to subdue despondency, and lead us to acquiesce in all the measures of the righteous Sovereign. Though much obscurity must necessarily envelope the government of an Infinite Mind, and great perplexities may be felt by those who attempt to scan his measures; yet some considerations may be suggested, which will serve to quell our anxieties and afford us repose under all the darkness, beneath his protecting power, his all-directing wisdom, and his paternal goodness.

1. Let us ever remember that the dispensations of God towards man are regulated by the consideration of his being a fallen and disordered creature. If we do not admit, or if we forget this, we are in great danger of falling into universal scepticism, and shall not be able to conclude, that "verily there is a God, that judgeth in the earth." If man is now in the state in which he was originally created, all is obscurity and gross darkness; but if we understand that man is a creature who, by his own fault, has lost that favour with God which he once enjoyed, and yet is placed under a dispensation of mercy; frowned upon, but not given up to destruction; open to receive the grace of God under the gospel, and by the mediation of Jesus Christ; then some light will shoot through the darkness, by which we may see the "righteousness and judgement" which "are the habitation of his throne."

The fallen state of man must be kept in view to account for the severities in the divine dealings with him. His banishment from paradise; the curse of the ground by which it brings forth thorns and briers, and the sweat of the brow by which he eats his bread; the labour and sorrow of the woman in child-bearing; and, finally, the sentence of death which is passed upon man, and keeps him always in bondage; and the present state of society, the fraud, rapine, cruelty, lust, and contention, are all accounted for, by simply reverting to the fall of man, from the image and favour of God. Yet, notwithstanding the severities of God, let it not be forgotten that there are mixtures of mercy which we have reason to admire. They that have forfeited all right to happiness, must not complain if any drops of it are found in their cup. They that have lost the inheritance, must not complain if any of its fruits are afforded to them. They that deserve to be "banished into outer darkness," must not complain if "clouds and darkness are round about Him" whom they have offended. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"*

They that deny the depravity of human nature are involved in perplexity, and speak on the subject of divine government with such doubt, confusion, and embarrassment, as increase scepticism in themselves, while they too often produce it in their admirers.

The doctrine of the fall of man must be considered as a fact, to a knowledge of which the Scriptures conducts us: it relates the circumstances of the original transgression; expressly asserts that "God made man upright but he hath sought out many inventions;"† and that "by one man, judgement passed upon all men to condemnation."‡

2. The Divine Being was not bound in justice, either to prevent the disordered state of man, or to correct it when it had taken place.

All moral government has its foundation in the suitability of its laws and motives to regulate and influence a

* Lam. iii. 39. † Eccles. vii. 29. ‡ Rom. v. 18.

creature endued with reason, understanding, and volition. All that is necessary in the government of such a creature as man, is that the law should be equitable, and that man should be originally possessed of faculties which rendered him capable of obedience. Were we to go further, and suppose that the Governor was obliged to see his law fulfilled, this would make him accountable to his own law, while the accountability of the creature would be destroyed. If the creature, besides having a righteous law and powers capable of obedience, must also be kept from the possibility of disobeying, the rule would return back, and become binding upon him that gave, rather than upon him that received it. Though I feel incompetent to go far into this subject, yet, from what we know of the nature of God and of man, it may be safely affirmed that it cannot be required of the Divine Governor to secure the obedience of his creatures any further than the law, as a motive, is calculated to have an effect upon rational minds. On what ground, then, can it be imagined that the world has a right to require God to prevent, or to remedy, moral evil?

3. The whole of those evils that form clouds and darkness round about God, are either the penal or natural effects of moral evil. The terrors of conscience, the fears of death, restlessness and dissatisfaction of mind; these and numerous other evils, are partly the natural, and partly the penal consequence of sin; and show that man is not in the state in which he was originally created, but is reduced by his disobedience to a state in which all things are "vanity and vexation of spirit."

With respect to evils of a physical nature, most of them are evident consequences of the state of man as a sinner. What is war, strife, contention, but the effect of evil passions; the natural fruits of apostasy? These are the actions and workings of the evil mind,—malice, envy, pride, and covetousness. The sentiment of love, which unites to God, being broken, what effects can be produced but dissension and disorder—domestic, national, and universal! There is, indeed, less disorder and confusion than might have been expected from the universality of

the apostasy; the wisdom and goodness of God, having checked a great proportion of the evil that would have proceeded from the corrupt fountain of our depravity. We can never sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God for such institutions as preserve a tolerable degree of order in this fallen world. Many benefits result from those checks and restraints which are imposed upon men, even when the heart is not renewed.

But still further. God has established another kingdom in the midst of the kingdoms of the world. He has created a new race among the race of men; the men who are the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world." They prevent that universal corruption which would work its ruin, and that darkness which would tend to utter destruction. Yet there is much darkness and corruption remaining: and if you ask how long it will continue, the prophet answers, "Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high;"* that is, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only thing which can correct the evils that prevail among mankind. This grace is not conferred by the Divine Being in the character of a governor, but as the fruit of his favour; it is, however, the only cure; and hence the most intense desires should possess our minds for the promotion of the gospel,—not only that God may be glorified "in the highest," but that on earth there may be "peace and good-will among men."

4. Those that receive the grace of Jesus Christ are still in such a situation as renders a great part of their trials and miseries necessary. Many of the evils of a depraved nature still remain, and need to be subdued and removed. Pride must be abased; "covetousness, which is idolatry," abhorred; impurities cleansed; and malevolent passions conquered. This is a state of probation; and it is repugnant to reason to talk of a state of probation in which nothing is met with that is dark and painful. Besides, the virtues and excellencies of the christian must be perfected in the same way in

* Isaiah xxxii. 15.

which the Captain of our Salvation was perfected: he must be conformed to Christ, and have fellowship with him in his sufferings. Jesus Christ is set forth as a type of all the happiness that accrues from suffering, from struggling, and from conquering; and we must resemble him in this respect. To this purpose our present state is adapted; every thing is so contrived as to afford opportunities of conquest. The pleasures of the world, the crosses of life, the remains of concupiscence, the venom of the "old serpent," and the insults, if not persecutions, of the wicked, are enemies by which we are beset; and we recover from their assaults, and overcome, by the exercise of prayer, vigilance, and persevering struggles. "There is no discharge in this warfare,"—we must conquer or die. God will confer no distinction (I will not say, but where it is deserved) but only where it may be given as a recompense for service. The design of Christ is to raise his people to glory, to communicate to them the fulness of God; but as he obtained these blessings by his death, as he purchased them by his blood, so in the same path he leads on his people to his glory. Thus he makes all our afflictions and enemies preparatives to our victory and triumph. The Divine Being will display his infinite wisdom in leading his people through the wilderness: and they shall walk "in white," with "palms in their hands," and crowns on their heads, who "come up out of great tribulation."*

5. The moral evils of man, and the depravity of human nature, are often, in a great measure, corrected and subdued by the natural evils of life, and thus are made the means of conducting to repentance, reformation, and happiness. The Spirit is not generally given to lead the soul to God and the enjoyment of a life of faith, without being preceded by affliction and troubles. He leads into the wilderness, and then speaks kindly unto man; he destroys our idols, hedges up our way, surrounds us with difficulties, and then pleads with us. Thus he deals

* Rev. vii. 9, 14.

with individuals, and thus also with nations at large. "When his judgements are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof learn righteousness." The overflowing of a corrupt opulence, the abundance of prosperity, nourishes, as in a hotbed, all the bad passions of the heart. But the sword, pestilence, poverty, pain, and innumerable other evils, excite us to deep and serious reflection, and thus prepare us, by the influence of the gospel, and the operation of grace, to return to God. A sense of a superior hand is felt; the vanity of the world is discovered; the soul looks out for something on which to rest, and is prepared to hear the voice which says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." I doubt not but the cloud now gathering, and the judgements now about to descend, will be the means of casting down high thoughts, and "humbling the lofty looks of man, that the Lord alone may be exalted," and that the world may be filled with his glory. One temple of the Holy Ghost is of more esteem in his sight than all the splendour of palaces, than all the riches of the world. Jesus Christ is overthrowing all the grandeur of man, that he may gather out of ruinous heaps, and from a perishing world, the materials of an imperishable temple. He is taking out of every nation a people whom he will form for his praise. In his providence he is subverting, scattering, destroying, in order that he may find stones to polish for a temple into which he will enter, into which his Father will enter, and where they will abide. This is the one great end the King of Righteousness has in view. The preparatory scenes of the world are as a "valley full of bones, very many and very dry;"* but the Spirit of the Lord shall raise out of them a people upon whom he will breathe, and they shall live and become a glorious army, animated by the heavenly grace. How is it possible, if we see things only with carnal eyes, that we should see them as God sees them, who directs all things with a view to an eternal state of being? Our "light affliction" may work for us a "far more exceeding and

* Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14.

eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal."* It is only by looking at "things unseen and eternal," that we can derive true benefit from the miseries of life. Under the hand of God every thing is propelled, every thing temporal is rushing forward to give way to, or to be united with, that which is eternal. This is the developement of the whole plan, the explication of all the complicated movements of providence. Look at the things which are eternal: there is the state to which we are tending, where we shall know in perfection what we now know only in part, and shall be satisfied that all has been conducted agreeably to the known character of God.

6. Yet, let it be observed, that even here the light of prophecy dispels many of those clouds which would otherwise obscure, for the present, the government and the throne of the Deity. We are assured, that in the latter day the gospel will be more widely disseminated, that its influence will be more extensive and efficacious, that the superstitious prejudices and vices, by which it has been so long opposed will give way; that the desert and the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and "shall blossom as the rose;"† that all the kingdoms of the earth shall bring their riches and glory into the church, the whole earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, and there shall be peace unto the ends of the earth. At what period this glory of the latter day will commence, is not for us to determine; it is generally agreed the time draws near: how long it will last is, again, not easy to tell. The thousand years are perhaps to be calculated upon the same scale as other prophecies, wherein a day stands for a year, which would make them more than three hundred and sixty thousand years. Be this as it may, at that period the Spirit will be poured down from on high; the potsherds of the earth that have been striving, will be dashed to pieces: the great Proprietor will

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

† Isaiah xxxv. 1.

come to fashion them anew: then "the fruitful field will be as a forest," and the forest "as the garden of God;"* none shall destroy in all God's holy mountain; the sacred influence of piety will bring us back to a paradisaical state; the love, the harmony, the plenty which will abound, will fill every heart with gladness; the temple of God shall be among men, the marriage of the Lamb will come; and the universal song will be, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!!"†

If this period shall continue long, the miseries that once reigned will be forgotten, and all the disorder that was introduced by the fall will be as nothing, when compared with the joy of the restoration; the creation of a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall reign."

"Behold, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; but who can abide the day of his coming?" He will come with his "fan in his hand." "He will sit like a refiner of silver." The chaff will be separated from the wheat; the visitations of the Almighty will find out his enemies; the phials of his indignation will be poured out upon the opposers of the gospel; wrath will come upon them in this world, preparatory to that of the eternal state. Let us then, my brethren, "flee from the wrath to come." Let us consider the salvation of the soul to be the one thing needful. The body is only the tenement in which the soul is lodged, the case in which it is enclosed; the soul is all important; its value infinite; "the redemption of it is precious;" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"‡

The gospel is the only refuge to which we can flee. It presents Christ crucified among you, shedding his blood as an atonement for your sin, willing to "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him." O my friends, accept his grace; break off from every sin; ask yourselves in what you have offended; set your sins in order before you; remembering that if you do not, Christ

* Isaiah xxxii. 15; li. 3. † Rev. xix. 6. ‡ Mark viii. 36, 37.

will do it at the great day. Judge yourselves now, that you may not hereafter be judged and sent to condemnation. Turn with humble penitence to the cross of Christ, and approach God by him; bend your knee before the throne of grace, plead the merits of the Redeemer's blood, and be "reconciled by his death."

May God grant you these blessings for the sake of his Son. Amen.

VII.

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PIOUS MEN.*

[PREACHED AT BEDFORD, MAY, 1815.]

NUMBERS xxi. 4.—*And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.*

It is generally understood and believed that the Old Testament is in great part typical. The history of the deliverance of Israel is a type of redemption by Jesus Christ; the paschal Lamb a type of the great Passover. The journey of the people through the wilderness represented our pilgrimage through this world; and the land of Canaan was a shadow of the heavenly rest. Viewed in this light, many parts afford direction and consolation peculiarly suited to individual experience.

I shall take leave to accommodate this passage as an expression of what frequently befalls the people of God in this world; "their souls are greatly discouraged, because of the way."

The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being: it is not our rest, it is not our abode; but the place of our pilgrimage, a passage to eternity.

There are two ways; the way to heaven, marked out by the example of Christ, and the way to perdition, marked out by an evil world. But there are many discouragements that the christian meets with, though he

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Samuel Hillyard.

is in the way to heaven. These we shall point out in the first place, and then direct you to some considerations to remove these discouragements.

I. I shall point out the discouragements in the way; and, in doing this, I shall keep my eye on the pilgrimage of the people who were originally referred to in the text, and thence draw my chief illustrations.

1. The way is circuitous, and therefore discouraging. This is suggested in the beginning of this verse: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom;" they took a way which was round about, and thus added to the tediousness of their journey. Their nearest route would have made it comparatively easy; but, instead of taking that, they went up and down in the wilderness. When we consider what God had done for this people in Egypt, it might have been expected that all the way would have been prosperous; that joy would have been heard in their tents, and triumph attended their march; and it would have been seen that they were the people of God by the blessings which they enjoyed: but, instead of this, they met with delays, hinderances, and troubles, till they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Why were we brought out hither? Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt."* Thus, souls that are brought to Jesus, and delivered from the slavery of sin and the curse of the law, in their first ardour overlook trials, and think of nothing but enjoyments; they do not anticipate the fightings and fears that are the portion of God's Israel. After a time, through want of watchfulness and care, the love of their espousals begins to decline, the world regains a degree of influence, the Spirit is grieved, and they fear God has become their enemy; they seem to themselves to go backward, and, indeed, are in danger of doing so, if they neglect to watch and pray; and much time is spent in mourning, retracing and recovering the ground that has been lost. This is too common a course: there is

* Exod. xvi. 3.

provision made for something better; there are promises and comforts which should encourage us to advance "from strength to strength;" but, through our neglects, we feel that we go backward instead of forward, and are therefore discouraged.

2. The way is through a wilderness, and is, on that account, discouraging. Moses reminded Israel of this, in Deuteronomy: "You remember how you went through the wilderness, a waste land, not sown or tilled, where there was no trace of human footsteps, and where no man dwelled." A wilderness is distinguished by the absence of necessary sustenance: there was no corn, nor vine, nor olive; nothing to sustain life. Thus, this world is a state of great privations; men are often literally straitened with poverty, penury, and sorrow, and know not how to conduct themselves in their difficulties, or how to surmount them: the supplies which they once had may be exhausted; and, though they have seen the hand of God, in affording them what was necessary on former occasions, they are ready to ask, Though the rock has supplied us, and the manna has descended, yet "can God spread a table for us in the wilderness?" With respect to the blessings of this life, they live by faith, and frequently have no provision or prospect of futurity.

But, in a spiritual sense, this world is also a wilderness. It has no natural tendency to nourish the spiritual life; nothing is derived from it of that kind: though spiritual blessings are enjoyed in it, the christian knows they are not the produce of the soil; the "bread" which he eats "cometh down from heaven;" the perpetual exhibition and communication of that one bread is all his support. Jesus Christ says, "I am the Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but he that eateth of this bread shall never die. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."* The ordinances of the gospel do not support and comfort us any farther than there is a heavenly communication and influence attending them. This is not peculiar to

* John vi. 48—50, 55.

the poor: the rich, who abound in worldly things, feel that this is a wilderness to their souls; they feel that there is something to which earthly treasures are not suited; wants which they cannot supply. The same bread that feeds the poor must feed them, or they will be lean from day to day: on this they depend as much as the meanest around them. David felt this when he said, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land."* "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before God?"† "Deliver me from the men of this world, who have their portion in this life." "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."‡ There was nothing on earth to satisfy him; he felt the present world to be a wilderness, because it was a state of absence from the divine presence. The "child of God" is a child of promise and of hope, and his eye is directed to the "glory that shall be revealed."

Again: there is much intricacy in the christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness; the Israelites could not have explored their way but by the direction of the pillar of fire and of the cloud: so the Christian often knows not how to explore his path. There are doctrinal difficulties by which we are perplexed, and errors to which we are continually exposed, and which we know not how to escape but by attention to "the light that shineth in a dark place." There are voices that are heard in the wilderness, crying, "Lo here," and "Lo there;" but we must not go after them: we must "search the Scriptures,"§ and ask the guidance of the Spirit, or we shall never have the comfort that arises from right views of truth, nor hear the "voice behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." I need not enumerate the various errors of the present day; but simply specify the two chief, which are, such a view of the doctrines of grace as destroys the necessity of

* Psalm cxliii. 6. † Psalm xlii. 1, 2.
‡ Psalm xvii. 15. § John v. 39.

holiness; and such a view of the Saviour as destroys the notion of grace. There are also many difficulties in practical religion; and thus we are again in danger of mistake. What shall we do to serve and please God? The general rules of scripture are sufficient, if studied with a humble mind, for general direction; but they do not furnish us with immediate and particular directions in all cases: diligent inquiry is necessary, attending to the voice of conscience, giving up sensual desires and inclinations, and rejecting temptations presented in various forms. There is only one grand remedy, if we would walk aright: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."*

3. The way lies through a hostile country, and is, therefore, discouraging. We pass through an enemy's land. The Israelites went up in military array, marching in file; and they had not proceeded far before the kings of Edom and Moab, and the Ammonite, opposed them. They were obliged to unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we: during our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armour of God, taking the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith;"† we must conquer as well as advance; we must fight our way, or die. There are three great enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil: these are allied, have perfect understanding with each other against us, and combine their efforts for our destruction. The christian pilgrim becomes a marked character in the world; he dwells alone; the men around him take the alarm; they endeavour to imbitter his choice and retard his progress. Satan is also alarmed, and he is never found to give up a subject without opposition.

A man going on in a carnal course will scarcely believe in Satan's temptations; he regards it as mere enthusiasm to think or speak of them; he has not felt them, and will not think they can be felt: but the

* James i. 5 † Ephes. vi. 13—17.

christian soon learns that he has to fight against "principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness." He finds his enemy assault him in various ways, and knows that he "must be resisted that he may flee from us;"* for "he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."† The flesh is also an enemy. The christian experiences the workings of carnality, a hankering after that which is evil, and to which he may have been addicted; as the Israelites after "the onions and garlic of Egypt." There is a tendency towards earth, as well as towards heaven; a principle that depresses and bends him downwards, as well as one that elevates and prompts him to soar above: he is forced to complain of "cleaving to the dust," and cannot always say, "My soul followeth hard after God." "There is a law in the members warring against the law of his mind."‡ He complains of "an evil heart of unbelief." There is in him an army with two banners; "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh:"§ this renders it necessary that our life should be a continual struggle. These conflicts belong to every condition. Those that have most of the world are often most exposed, and are seldom less exempt than others from assaults; and no wonder that hereby christians are often discouraged, especially when they feel they do not always succeed. Even when they are not vanquished, they sometimes lose ground; and when they have overcome, they are afraid of fresh conflicts, in which their strength may fail, and their enemies gain the advantage.

4. The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage, and the consequent displeasure of God, are discouraging: there are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens his people, though he pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. How often did the children of Israel offend God and awaken his anger? and where is the son whom the Lord does not see fit to chasten? These chastenings of the Lord often drink up or oppress

* James iv. 7. † 1 Pet. v. 8.
‡ Rom. vii. 23. § Gal. v. 17.

the spirit, and overwhelm the soul. "All thy waves and billows are gone over me."* They think of God, and are afraid. They cry, "Oh, be not a terror unto me,"† lest I suffer thy frown and be distracted. The bitter herbs are unpalatable; the fears of hell seize hold of them as terribly as when they were first awakened to a sense of sin and danger; they feel their frailty and tendency to depart from God; and they apprehend future trials, and know not how long the painful dispensation will continue. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore?"‡

5. The total defection of men from the path is a great discouragement to those who still continue in the way. I do not think that all who died in the wilderness were cut off as rebels; indeed it could not be, for Moses and Aaron were of the number: yet they were set forth as types to warn us of the danger of not entering into rest. Here was a shadow of the greater loss of them that "turn back to perdition." How many can we recollect of those who were once active and zealous in the cause of God, that have gone away and walked no more with Christ, of whom we may say, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it,"§ "to turn again to the beggarly elements of this world!"‖

Providence sets a mark upon such persons: their idols are snatched from them, and they become as pillars of salt to remind us of the danger of looking behind us. What deep searchings of heart are hereby occasioned! "I also shall fall by the hand of" the enemy; I have in me a similar nature with his, and may be exposed to similar temptations. "Lord, hold me up," or I shall not be safe. Nothing weakens the confidence of the christian army more than the failure of those who appeared brave in the day of battle, and conspicuous in the ranks. When ministers and eminent professors fall away, our hands hang down; we suspect others; we are jealous of

* Psalm xlii. 7. † Jer. xvii. 17. ‡ Psalm lxxvii. 8.
§ 2 Pet. ii. 21. ‖ Gal. iv. 9.

ourselves. "Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* "Every one must give an account of himself to God,"† and "let every one have rejoicing in himself, and not in another,"‡

6. The *length* of the way is discouraging. The time occupied by the Israelites from their entering to their leaving the wilderness, was forty years. Thus long were Caleb and Joshua in travelling through it! This was a tedious journey; such a one as was never performed before: a type of the journeys of the church militant. The whole of human life, with all its toils and cares, is comprehended in this journey; there is no rest, no cessation of the pilgrim state, till life is finished. "Be thou faithful unto death," or all thy former toil is lost and will be of no avail. Now, though human life is short in itself, yet to our limited conception it appears long; especially when passed in suffering and pain, "when the clouds return after the rain," and there is none to tell us "how long." In protracted afflictions is seen the patience of the saints. It is more easy to endure the greatest shocks of trouble, than to endure those pains which are more moderate, for a long season. Patience is worn away by continued afflictions, rather than overwhelmed by the rolling wave. Those saints, who endure in private, though unnoticed by their neighbours, and perhaps unknown, are the bravest heroes of the christian camp. We must, my brethren, hold out unto the end. We must touch the goal, or we run in vain: our last effort must be made in this journey, or we shall never reach the Canaan that lieth beyond the waters of the grave.

Thus I have given you a serious representation of difficulties and trials; and it may appear discouraging to many: the people of God may be much discouraged at times, when they know not how long they shall thus have to walk and be weary. But there is another view of our pilgrimage: it is not wise to hide our eyes from trials; let us, therefore consider them well; yet let us,

* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24 † Rom. xiv. 12. ‡ Gal. vi. 4.

at the same time, inquire whether among these scenes there are not interspersed motives to support, encourage, and animate our minds.

II. I shall now, therefore, endeavour to direct you to some considerations to remove your discouragements.

I. Remember, the way you are in, believer, is "a right way," notwithstanding all that has been said. Infinite Wisdom has ordained it: and if you reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil, and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage: no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no path too gloomy. There was no bitter ingredient in your cup that could have been spared; no affliction but what operated to promote the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." You will look back and acknowledge that Infinite Wisdom directed the darkest path, and caused it to terminate in joy and glory unutterable. This is the way in which many have been conducted that are now in glory; they are gone up out of "great tribulation." There is a "great cloud of witnesses," who "through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises:" let us also, with patience, "run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame."* Take the prophets and ancient saints as examples of suffering: think how they were tried. Remember the prison of Joseph, the reproach of Moses, the dungeon of Jeremiah, and the death of Isaiah. "Remember the patience of Job" under all his afflictions. God has heated the furnace for some of the most eminent saints seven times more than common, because they were endued with a divine power of suffering with patience, and were favoured with the presence of the Son of God. The people of God have been chosen in the furnace of affliction; "the bush has been on fire, but not consumed," for God was in the midst to preserve it; and he not only preserves his saints, but gradually conforms them to his Son Jesus, who himself suffered: for this purpose he came

* Heb. xii. 1, 2.

into the world and united himself to human nature, wherefore arm yourselves with the same mind. Our sufferings are necessary, to wean us from the world and to deliver us from sin: "he that hath suffered is free from sin."* We must either suffer by self-denial, or be chastised of the Lord. "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me:"† let him behold both the cross and the crown, and never turn aside from that path which leads to the crown, whatever cross he may have to bear. A man of this world, who is governed by sensual inclinations, and seeks after vain pleasures, is "dead while he lives."‡ This was not the course of our Master; and, be it remembered, it is he who says, "Let him follow *me*."

2. Another encouragement is, that God is with his people in the way. He was with Israel to guide and defend them. They had visible tokens of his presence, and saw that he stretched out his arm for their protection, and the overthrow of their adversaries. Thus also, when Jesus sent forth his disciples, he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."§ If he lays upon our shoulders the heavy cross, he supplies unction for the bruises it occasions. If he leads into the wilderness, he "speaks comfortably;" he spreads a table there, "and his banner over us is love." "Greater is he that is with you than all that are against you." God is in the world as the great upholder, governor, and benefactor; but he is in the church by his special grace, as a vital principle, an ever-living friend to sustain, animate, and influence. With him we have communion, and from him communications of mercy. We are one with him; all our need shall be supplied: "as our days, so shall our strength be."‖ We may know not how to meet an expected trial; but grace shall come, and be all-sufficient for us. Only keep your face Zion-ward, and "though the young men faint, and are weary" in waiting upon the Lord, you shall "renew your strength, mount up on wings as eagles, run and not be weary,

* 1 Pet. iv. 1. † Matt. xvi. 24. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 6
§ Matt. xxviii. 20. ‖ Deut. xxxiii. 25.

walk and not faint."* "His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness." "When I am weak, then am I strong;"† most gladly, therefore, will I "glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him who loved us."‡ Only look not behind you, think not of turning back, and he "will never leave you nor forsake you."

3. To overcome the discouragements of the way, remember there is no other way that leads to heaven. You cannot reconcile the service of sin and the world with the hope of heaven and the enjoyment of everlasting life in that holy state, and in the presence of the holy God. Will you, then, forego the hope of Canaan; as you must when you yield to sin, when you give yourselves to the world? There is no other way to heaven than the way to which the Scriptures of truth direct you. You must "crucify the flesh;" you must "purify yourselves" by faith through the Spirit; you must be conformed to the Saviour; you must take up the trials of life with patience, or look for the punishment of death. The choice of Moses was truly wise; it was the only choice wisdom *could* make. Happy are they who choose like him; Canaan shall be for ever theirs. The Land of Promise was but a type, a shadow, of their inheritance; it was a perishable inheritance; it was but a mere span, a moment of happiness and glory, compared with that which shall be revealed, of which, at present, we can only say we know but in part: for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."* A few moments there will banish all earthly trials from your mind; or you shall remember them only to enhance your bliss. The enemy, like the Egyptians in the Red Sea, shall be seen no more. The trials of the saints shall be left far behind, and sin shall never vex them again. How will this happiness repay all their toil!

* Isaiah xl. 31. † 2 Cor. xii. 10.
‡ Rom. viii. 37 § 1 John iii. 2.

how sweet will be the remembrance of the bitterest herbs! how unspeakable and inconceivable the joy, when they shall be with angels, and justified spirits, and Christ and God, in the kingdom of glory! We are lost in the contemplation of this sublime subject; yet we know that future happiness is greater "than eye hath seen or ear hath heard." How should it transport us to think that we may be counted worthy of this high calling; that God hath revealed to us this glory! It is only by Jesus Christ and his gospel that "life and immortality are brought to light." It is by God's becoming man that man may become like God, a partaker of the divine nature. Let us not, my brethren, deem ourselves unworthy; let us not sit down content with inferior things, like Esau, who, for "one mess of pottage, sold his birthright." It is infinitely better to suffer in this life, than to lie down in death. Go forward, then, christian; go forward: "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before."

I pray God that these plain truths may be blessed to your souls; that you may be stirred up to diligent perseverance in the ways of God; that you may be a comfort to the minister whom God hath placed over you; and that he may "present you with joy at the coming of Jesus Christ." And, if any of you have not yet entered on this way, to such we would affectionately say "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Come, ye careless ones, "ye simple ones, turn in hither." You think not of death, but of the gaieties of life; you walk after the desire of your hearts and the delight of your eyes; but there is no happiness in your path; if you proceed, you *must* perish; for it leadeth to destruction. All your pleasure is but for a moment; there is more true pleasure in the roughest path of the christian than in the smoothest road you can find: you will never have peace, consolation, or rest, till you come to the Saviour. Come, and he will do you good: you shall have all the innocent enjoyments of life that will be for your real comfort; all your trials shall be ordered by wisdom and love; you

shall have the best support in the day of adversity, and in the life to come, everlasting glory. "All things shall be yours;" Christ your Saviour, and God, the Creator of the universe, your God and Father.

We do not know what you may meet with by the way, nor what you shall enjoy in the end; but what we enjoy you shall enjoy. God will remember you with the favour that he beareth to his own people, and visit you with his salvation." O, that every one might come! None would be turned away without the blessing: there is room enough; "there is bread enough and to spare." We invite, nay entreat you, to leave those muddy streams, which must be given back in tears of repentance. Come and taste of the "water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."* Come and partake of these blessings. Every moment, while you delay, your danger increases: and if you utterly refuse, you perish! "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."†

VIII.

THE VANITY OF MAN APART FROM HIS IMMORTALITY.‡

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, AUGUST, 1815.

PSALM lxxxix. 47.—*Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*

THE Psalm in which these words occur is supposed to have been written on occasion of the calamities which befell the kingdom of Israel in the reign of Rehoboam; and the Psalmist appears to have been lamenting those distressing events by which the glory of David's family

* Rev. xxii. i. † Rev. xxii. 17.

‡ Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield, A.M. of Clifton.

seemed to be extinguished. In the bitterness of his feelings, he is carried out, from the particular occasion which excited them, to a general contemplation of the vanity of human existence. From these words I propose to show, that,—considered merely in his present state, apart from any reference to eternity and the prospect disclosed by revelation,—man (it may be truly said) is "made in vain."

1. The first thing that strikes us, in such a survey of our being, as circumscribed within the term of mortality, is *the shortness of its duration.* "Remember how short my time is." This circumstance, which cannot have escaped, or failed to affect, any reflecting person, is frequently adverted to by the sacred writers. "My days," says Job, "are swifter than a post; they are passed away as a shadow." "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: as for man, his days are as grass; in the morning it is green; in the evening it is cut down and withered." The transient nature of his existence stamps an inexpressible meanness on man, if we confine our view to the present life; and forces us to confess that, laying aside the hope of immortality, "every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity."

2. The same reflection must have occurred to most persons of a thoughtful character, when they have contemplated *the general state of that world* in which we are placed; the mischief and misery that pervade it; the disorder and desolation which the unruly passions of men perpetually introduce; the wantonness with which they rush to deeds of violence and injustice; the almost incessant national contentions, in which the destruction of one part of the human race seems to become the business and sport of the other. Whether the balance of good or of evil preponderate on the whole, is a question we may here leave undecided. In some more favoured conditions of society, it is probable there may be a predominance of good; in others, less favoured, of evil: but, that such a question should exist at all, is itself a sufficient proof how much evil exists in this world.

Viewed, therefore, merely as they are here, and excluding the supposition of a future state, all men will appear to be "made in vain."

3. Again, when we recollect how many thousands of our species are born the *subjects of some inherent, incurable disease or imperfection of body,* such as may be said to render their life a protracted malady;—when we call to mind how many are constitutionally the victims of dejected spirits and a morbid melancholy, such as cast a gloom over every surrounding object, and dim their perceptions to the fairest scenes of life and nature; (a case which is exemplified in the great and amiable Cowper;) we are compelled to acknowledge, of the multitude so circumstanced, that—if we consider them merely as existing in that hypothetical state which terminates with death—they also are "made in vain."

4. And farther, when we take into the account those millions of mankind who are condemned, through the whole of life, to *manual and mechanical labours;* whose day after day is consumed in a constant round of the same unvaried employment,—the twisting of a thread,—the continuing the friction of a wheel,—the exercise of the file, the saw, or the hammer, and similar operations, which have so little concern with mind, so little tendency to engage the intellectual powers by which man is distinguished from the surrounding creatures, that they are as well, if not better, performed by various machines of modern inventions;—who, that limits his view of man to this sublunary scene, can forbear to sympathise with the desponding Psalmist in the text? In labours like these he observes millions of those beings are employed, who are created with a mind capable of looking backward and forward with endless activity of thought,—capable of comprehending truth and advancing in knowledge,—capable of enjoying a happiness commensurate with its own vast desires. The inheritors of such faculties are employed in labours like these; in the performance of which, after the practice of a few years, they attain such a facility and perfection, that no room is left for improvement; and for the rest of life nothing

remains but the repetition of the self-same labours;—labours in which the mind is altogether passive and dormant, nor is any exercise afforded to the reason or the affections. Not that I would be understood to censure the mechanism of civilized society, which evidently requires this arrangement in a greater or less degree; but, walk the streets of a commercial or manufacturing city; observe the multiplicity of handicraft occupations which meet your eye at every point; and, without blaming the existing organization of society, I ask whether,—if cares like these are to engage the chief part of human attention, (cares rendered, perhaps, necessary by the imperfection of our present circumstances, but immensely disproportioned to the capacity of our nature,)—if men are condemned to terminate their existence in these pursuits, and are not reserved for another and higher state of being, I ask whether the great majority of mankind are not "made in vain?"

5. But there are those, it may be said, who do not fall under this melancholy representation;—men of wealth, minions of fortune, who bask in her smiles and revel in her favours; whose circumstances seem to be formed by their will, and who appropriate whatever they desire. Surely, you will say, such "men of this world, *have* their portion in *this* life;" surely an existence like theirs, even if we suppose it confined to earth, apart from any ulterior consideration, has a sufficient end in itself; and, though their existence is short, they are exempt from the charge of having been "made in vain." Now there is a delusion in this view: and if we examine the advantages which men of wealth possess over others, we shall find that nearly all the pleasures peculiar to superfluous opulence are reducible to two classes; the class of *sensual gratifications*, and that of *ambitious distinctions*.

(1.) And first, with regard to the *gratifications of sense* which the rich have at their command; how little *these* can be said to redeem their possessors from the lot of a vain existence,—how little *these* conduce to supply that happiness which is the end and perfection of our being,—will appear by the following considerations.

The pleasures of sense, in the first place, can never be proposed as an adequate end of our creation; because, in pursuing them, we always regard them as subordinate to something of superior importance, our regard to which is allowed to be the just rule of sensual indulgence. The inferiority of these pleasures to something beyond and above themselves is never doubted; a wise man advises a proper abstinence from such pleasures for the sake of *health;* a good man, for the sake of *virtue;* either of which is justly regarded as an object superior to that which it ought to regulate. But the true end of existence must be something final, something beyond which nothing can be proposed as of superior magnitude: and unless there be alleged some worthier object of our creation than one which is thus referred to another which has a right to supersede it, it cannot be disproved that "men are made in vain."

Besides which, let it be recollected, in the next place, that the pleasures of sense, pursued beyond a certain limit, so far from tending to create happiness, tend to destroy it, by the very construction of those organs which are the instruments of sensual enjoyment. That craving after happiness which every bosom feels, and the satisfaction of which involves the perfection of our existence, cannot be supposed to attain its proper object in any of those animal pleasures, of which the pursuit (unless kept in continual check) leads to the extinction of happiness and existence itself. The proper object of this grand desire of our nature must be something, in the pursuit of which we may safely let loose the utmost energy and ardour of the soul; something essentially, entirely, and eternally good, in the pursuit of which we need not fear lest we should injure ourselves, but may reckon upon benefit and success proportioned to our zeal and diligence—the pursuit of such an object constituting, in effect, the proper business of our being.

And, in the third and last place, the enjoyment of the senses cannot present to *human* beings the appropriate and distinguishing end of their existence, because they are only enjoyed by man in common with the lower

animals. *That*, whatever it be, which forms the true end of *human* existence, must be something which is adapted to the great peculiarities of our nature as *rational* and *moral* beings: but sensual fruition is received in an equal, perhaps a greater degree, by the brutes. To what purpose this comprehensiveness of reason, this prodigality of powers, this grasp of memory, this vigour of imagination, this restless activity of hope and desire, if the inheritor of such high endowments were doomed to seek the perfection of his existence in the command of sensual gratifications? Few, in fact. are so infatuated as to believe that such gratifications are the end of their creation. Notwithstanding the ardour with which the pleasures of sense are pursued by many, still they are always regarded (at least where society is not unusually depraved) as matter of shame and concealment to their votaries; all thinking persons are anxious to redeem their character from the degrading imputation of devoted sensuality, by intermingling other and worthier pursuits with pleasures of this description; and he who should abandon himself, in the gratification of animal propensities, to the neglect of every higher aim, would be universally allowed to have lived "in vain."

(2.) But there is another class of pleasures, as was observed, with the command of which wealth supplies us; the *pleasures of ambition*,—the respect and homage which are paid to high station and splendid circumstance. Now, on an examination of these pleasures, it will be found that they are unreal and imaginary,—that they consist of nothing more than a fiction of the imagination, a false elation of the mind, by which we may be said to *identify* ourselves, or to be identified by others, with all those varied instruments of pleasure which affluence commands; by which we *diffuse* ourselves (as it were) over the whole sphere in which we preside. Of those who place their happiness in pleasures of this class it may be most emphatically said, that "they walk in a *vain show*:" and could we assign no better end of our being than that which thus places it in a mere *delusion*,—a false *semblance*

of enjoyment,—we should be reduced to confess that "all men are made in vain."

Thus it appears that neither the pleasures of sense nor those of ambition, (to the one or the other of which classes all the pleasures of wealth are reducible,) afford any adequate account of our existence as confined to the present scene; and that *men of wealth* are not, more than others, exempt from the mournful charge of the Psalmist.

6. To proceed. Neither can we exempt from the same condition *men of knowledge*, who pass life in the cultivation of intellect and the pursuit of truth;—an object, it must be allowed, better suited to the nature, and better proportioned to the dignity of man as a rational being, than those before mentioned;—an object which too many it is to be feared, have in every age regarded as the very highest which they could propose to themselves, as characteristic of a state beyond which they could aspire to none more exalted, and in which, if they could but escape from all intrusions of passion and accident, they would be completely happy, they would desire no higher order of existence.

That the favourite pleasures of such men,—the pleasures of knowledge and intellect,—are noble in their nature, exquisite in their degree, and permanent in their continuance, will not be denied by those who have sufficiently experienced, and who are competent to estimate them. But, in the first place, to how *few* are these pleasures confined! What a mere scantling of the race is qualified to enjoy them in any considerable degree? Not one person in a thousand has either the abilities or the opportunities requisite to their high enjoyment; while to the rest, to the great bulk of mankind, they are the hidden treasures of a sealed book. And can *that* be supposed the final object of our being, which can be enjoyed but by a small proportion of those who inherit that being! Is it to be conceived that, while the million are "made in vain," only here and there a chosen individual is permitted to attain a destiny worthy of his nature? The truth is, of the few who make knowledge

the aim of their engagements, none can secure himself from the intrusion of disturbing passions or distressing accidents. It is only in the smooth expanse of the lake, when there is no wind to agitate its bosom, that the forms of surrounding nature are reflected clear and unbroken: and thus it is only where the mind is in a state of undisturbed tranquillity, that the pleasures of science and literature can be pursued with success. But the lights of philosophy are liable to be broken by the waves of adversity, and darkened by the clouds of grief; the man of study is obnoxious to the same external privations,—of health, friends, or fortune,—with other men: the invasions of calamity, to which all are exposed, will find him out in the most sequestered retreat; and, after all, he will be feelingly convinced that, if knowledge be the end of our being, and that being terminates on earth, —he, like all other men, has been "made in vain."

Besides which, we have it on the testimony of one of the greatest proficients in knowledge that ever appeared among men, that "increase of knowledge," far from being increase of happiness, "is increase of sorrow." And though this proposition may require to be received with some limitations, certain it is that the mere *knowledge* of things, the mere *perception* of truth, is something extremely different, something entirely separable, from the *enjoyment* of things, the *possession of real happiness*. There is not, between the two, the slightest necessary connexion: there may exist, in the same character, the scantiest portion of the one in union with the largest measure of the other. We by no means find that, the more things we know, the more we enjoy our existence; and the simple reason is, that knowledge has its abode in the *understanding*, while happiness is seated not in the understanding, but in the *heart;* so that the condition of the rudest peasant may be an object of envy to the most enlightened philosopher. In a word,—happiness is a state which we are *all* equally concerned to attain; but wealth and knowledge are conditions accessible only to a *few*. Happiness has its seat in the *heart;* but wealth and knowledge are not adapted to satisfy our

affections: therefore wealth or knowledge cannot be supposed to constitute that proper happiness of man, without which he is "made in vain."

7. Once more. There yet remains another and a yet more elevated order of men, who place the grand object of their being in *religion;* who think of God, trust in God, and, on all occasions, devote themselves to do the will of God: men who, receiving the Scriptures as His own divine revelation, conceive that they are pardoned and accepted by their heavenly Father, through the mediation of the Son of his love; conceive that they are renewed and influenced by the power of his Spirit; and, regarding the "things which are seen and temporal" as preparatory to those which are "unseen and eternal," "set their affections on things above, not on things of the earth;" consider themselves as "dead to the world, and their life as hid with Christ in God; and trust that when He who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with Him in glory." What shall we say of such persons? We say that, if this were the only state of being ordained for man, *they*, like others, would be "made in vain:" we say, with the desponding Psalmist, "Verily, they have cleansed their hearts in vain, and in vain washed their hands in innocence:" we affirm, with the apostle Paul himself, "If in *this* life only they have hope, they are of all men *most* miserable," *most* worthy to be commiserated. For, according to this supposition, they are the *only* persons who are utterly disappointed of their object; the only persons who, (by a fatal and irreparable mistake,) expecting an imaginary happiness in an imaginary world, lose their only opportunity of enjoying those present pleasures of which others avail themselves; dooming themselves to grasp at shadows, while they neglect the substance; harassed with a perpetual struggle against their natural propensities and passions; incurring, perhaps, the enmity or ridicule of their fellow-mortals; and—if the supposition be true that there is no such future state as that which they anticipate—all this is in vain!

But that supposition is *not*, for a moment, to be be-

lieved: these men are not thus deluded; they are *not* to be thus disappointed; it is impossible to conceive that they are. The perplexity, the inconsistency, the palpable absurdity, into which *those* are driven who argue upon the non-existence of immortality, the falsehood of revelation, proves, as far as proof can be expected, that *theirs* is a false hypothesis! Upon *their* hypothesis, man is the greatest enigma in the universe; that universe is itself a problem not to be solved: all is mystery, confusion, and despair! Bring in the light of revelation and immortality, the clouds and thick darkness in which the scene was enveloped disperse, and all is clear and harmonious. Man, with his astonishing endowments, is no longer "made in vain;" the universe, with its amazing phenomena, is no longer "made in vain!" We learn at once the cause and the cure of that vanity, in subjection to which "the whole creation groans," together with man. The origin of our misery and death, the recovery of life and immortality, are alike brought to light. Man has fallen by sin from the favour of his Maker; hence all the disorders and evils that surround him: but a salvation has been provided; "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, *not imputing to them their trespasses!*" *This*, my dear brethren, is the testimony of God in his own word; and, though men may dispute its authority, "let *God*," we say, "be true, but every man a liar."

To attain a share in this salvation, to recover the true end and perfection of our existence, in the resemblance and the favour of "the *only happy God;*" this is the great object of desire and pursuit to those whose eyes are opened to their real situation, whose hearts are awakened to a sense of their real want. And, "remembering how short their time is," they are the more in earnest that, by a glorious reverse of their naturally ruined state, they may prove at last to have *not* been "made in vain." They "pass the time of their sojourning in fear;" they are "sober, and watch unto prayer,"

"As obedient children, they fashion not themselves after the lusts of their ignorance, but, as He who hath called them is holy, so they seek to be holy in all their conversation." In a word, they count all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour: for they "*know* whom they have believed;" they have the *fullest assurance* in their faith. On other objects, which are so eagerly pursued by the men of this world, they have closed their eyes for ever: "forgetting the things behind, reaching forward to those before, they *press* forward to the mark" and prize of their high calling; and, though racks, ropes, swords, or fires were to obstruct the way, they would *rush* through them all to reach their eternal goal! Jesus Christ is to them the very food of the soul, the very bread of life; and they make it the substance of their continual supplication, "Whatever beside is denied, *Lord, evermore give us this bread!*" Such are the views and affections which inspire true believers; such the object which, stretching into eternity, puts out, casts a darkness over, the brightest sublunary splendours; an object, apart from which it may be justly said, that "men," that "*all men are made in vain!*"

The necessity and certainty of that salvation, that immortality, which the gospel reveals, is *one* and the *first* inference from what has been said: *another*, and the *last* inference I shall mention, is the extreme folly and misery of those who persist in the neglect of this salvation, this immortality. It is to throw away the end of existence, to sever ourselves from the possibility and the infinitude of happiness, and, in the awful language of scripture, to "*judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life!*" If a vast sum of money were committed to us, and we suddenly discovered that, by our own neglect, the whole was lost, we should be affected, probably, with serious alarm and regret: but what must be our emotion,—what our consternation, remorse, and despair,—should we discover, at the last judgement, that we have lived *in vain;* that, so far as our own interest is concerned, we have been made *in vain;* that we have received the grace of God

in vain; that, having neglected the one salvation, we are *lost*, lost in the scale of being; immortal creatures, *lost* to the great purpose for which our Maker gave us existence; *lost* to happiness; irrecoverably and for ever *lost!* What must it be to discover that the mistake we have committed is at once *infinite* and *irreparable;* that we have been guilty of an infatuation, which it will require *eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend!* Now is the accepted time: let us earnestly avoid such an unutterable calamity; let us choose the favour of God as the only adequate end of our being; and embrace the salvation of Jesus Christ as the only way to attain that end; in a word, let us act as those who are swayed by the conviction that the *christian* is the only man of whom it can be said, in relation to eternal felicity, that he is *not* "made in vain."

IX.

DEATH, THE LAST ENEMY, SHALL BE DESTROYED.*

[PREACHED AT BEDFORD, MAY, 1817.]

1 COR. xvi. 26.—*The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

IN this chapter the apostle directs the views of christians to the final consummation of all things; when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, in our nature, having answered the ends for which it was established, shall be surrendered, "and God shall be all in all."

This kingdom is, in the mean time, progressive, and will be so till all enemies shall be subdued and placed under his feet. The apostle brings in the words of the text as an instance of this general proposition. But it may not be improper to remark that there is an inaccuracy in our common version, which so vitiates its application, that it does not seem to sustain the conclusion to which the apostle had arrived. It was his purpose to establish the perfection of our Saviour's conquest, the advancement of his triumphs, and the prostration of all enemies whatever beneath his power. Now to say that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," by no means affords a proof of this position. Though death might be destroyed, and be the last enemy that should be destroyed, it would not thence appear but that other enemies might remain, not destroyed. But the proper rendering is, "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

* From the Notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard

Having made this observation, I will now direct your attention to the import of the proposition; and will consider—

I. The nature of the great enemy that shall be destroyed; and why he is called "the last enemy."

II. The manner and the successive stages in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer, this last enemy.

I. The nature of that enemy that shall be destroyed, and why he is called "the *last* enemy."

It is not necessary to say much to show that death is, in *many* respects, an enemy to the sons of Adam. It is so, first, if we consider it in its most obvious effects, the dissolution of the human frame. Every part of the body is part of a marvellous fabric, of a wonderful machine; which bears upon it the mark of divine wisdom and skill in its contrivance and execution. It is a work which man is not only unable to form or contrive, but the contrivance of which he is not able to comprehend. Every man possesses and carries in himself certain excellencies of composition, and enjoys the benefit of innumerable operations, while he is wholly unacquainted with the internal machinery by which they are produced. If we look upon the Goths and Vandals as the enemies of the nations, and of all civilized society, because they destroyed palaces and temples, and the ancient monuments of art; what must we think of death,

which demolishes, not only in one victim, but in innumerable victims, the noblest fabric that was ever raised on earth; and spoils the most skilful works that were ever constructed? All human beauty, and vigour, and strength, are at once laid prostrate by the power of death; are broken and shivered to pieces under the stroke of this great tyrant. Were we to see, at one glance, all the victims which, in different lands and climes, and in all ages, have fallen before him, we should behold a pile of ruins raised to the heavens; but these ruins are mostly crumbled to dust, and concealed in the darkness of the grave; or what an amazing view would be afforded of the power and conquests of this universal enemy!

Again, Death is an enemy, as he puts an end to all that is terrestrial and temporary with regard to man. All the schemes, and projects, and thoughts, that relate only to the concerns of time, are destroyed. "In that very day," says the word of God, "his thoughts perish:" all the thoughts of the sublimest genius, of the most acute philosophers, of the subtlest statesmen, of the most ambitious projectors, perish! All find, at once a termination to their intellectual labours, their sublunary joys and sorrows, hopes and fears; they go only as far as death leaves space for them; and stop where he opposes his power. As much, therefore, as the world is worth,—as much as it possesses of value in the eyes of man,—so much is death to be considered as a formidable foe, standing forth against him, and in opposition to his career.

Say, ye ambitious, ye lovers of wealth, ye pursuers of earthly pleasure, what will all the objects you desire avail you when you are summoned to meet this last enemy, and are by him confined to the narrow limits of the grave? What will you do in that period when your "souls shall be required of you," and you are questioned, "Whose shall these things be?" As much as you value these, so much death will be your enemy.

Death is also an enemy, because of the dissolution of the tenderest ties of nature and affection; of all those

endearments of friendship that bind man to man. Death tears asunder brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, parents and children; he snatches the tender infant from the mother's breast, or bereaves it of parental care, and leaves it a helpless orphan in this wilderness. One part of the mortal compound is left by him to mourn and sigh, while the other part is mingled with corruption, and becomes a companion of worms. Death so mars the features, that the most passionate admirers of the fairest and most lovely forms of beauty, are constrained to say, as Abraham said of Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight." All the fruits of friendship are withered by his breath; and one has been called alone, to go through the dark passage where no one could accompany him: while the survivor, who is left behind, frequently experiences the greatest sufferings, from the emotions and reflections of his mind. Alas! how many fond mothers, beloved children, and valuable friends, have been already sacrificed to this inexorable tyrant! Nor is there any union so closely formed, nor any friendship so established and strengthened, but it will be cut asunder and destroyed by the stroke of this great enemy, death.

But the most terrible yet remains;—the moral, or rather the eternal consequences of death. If divine grace had not interposed, death has a sting by which he would pierce every transgressor, and send him to a state of interminable misery. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."* The death of the body is by no means the full infliction of the penalty of the divine law. What we look upon as death, is only a dark passage which conducts the sinner to the state of eternal death. The dissolution of our body, and the separation of the spirit from it, is but a preparation; like knocking off the chains and fetters from a prisoner who is about to be led forth to the place of execution. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."† Eternal life is here contrasted with death: but

* 1 Cor. xv 56. † Rom. vi. 23.

what is the opposite of eternal life, but eternal death—the death of the soul, which consists of the perpetual loss of hope; a cutting off from the presence and favour of God; a sense of his eternal wrath, which burns like devouring fire? The second death treads in the footsteps of the first, and its shadow covers it; it is the infliction of the sentence of the Eternal Governor of the universe; and the fear of it makes those who are aware they are sinners, willing to struggle with a load of cares and sorrows, rather than fall into the hand of the living God; for it is a fearful thing,—"a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

There are many properties of this enemy which give him the pre-eminence of terror. He is an inexorable enemy. Others may be bribed by riches, soothed by flatteries, moved by the tears and sorrows of a suppliant, or reconciled by a mediator; a daysman may interpose; one may come between us and our enemy, who may interpose to ward off or suspend the blow; but none can "give a ransom for his brother," to redeem his soul from death:† "there is no discharge in that war:"‡ the redemption of the soul ceaseth "for ever;" there is no price that can be offered, or would be accepted. All the riches of the universe would be despised, if they were offered for only an hour's deliverance from the power of death: he wants the man himself, not what he possesses. Death will tear away the most ambitious from the heights of his power, the wealthy from the midst of all his stores, and the voluptuous from the scene of all his pleasures. His ear is insensible to the groans of the child, and his eye is unmoved by the tears of the mother; he is not to be arrested or turned aside by the wailings of innocence, or by the outcries of guilt. All are levelled by the same undistinguishing stroke, and there is no possibility of release.

Death is an impartial enemy. Other enemies have particular grounds of quarrel; they do not oppose the *whole* of the species, but some individual, or a number

* Heb. x. 31. † Psalm xlix. 7. ‡ Eccles. viii. 8.

of persons from whom they have received, or suppose they have received, an injury: but every one of the human race is the object of his enmity; his arrows will level all in the dust: "for it is appointed for *all* men once to die;"* and the grave is the "house of *all* the living." The strongest know that all their strength must fail: amidst all their dissipation, their hurry and care, their jollity and mirth, they know that in the path along which they hasten on there is one that will meet and destroy them; and they begin to look forward with anxiety and dismay in proportion as they approach the seat of this terrible majesty.

Like other great monarchs, he also has harbingers to proclaim and prepare for his approach. He sends before him the most agonizing pains and afflictions; diseases that consume our strength and vigour, and sometimes induce us to expect his arrival every moment. By the trembling joints, the dimness of the eyes, the changed countenance, the breaking of the "bowl at the cistern," and the loosing of the "silver cord," we know that he is near at hand. There is a shadow of death cast before him, extending according to the height of this terrible majesty, and stretching over part of the vale of life: yes, all that precedes our dissolution, all that is preparatory to the last stroke, are harbingers of death; afflictive in themselves, and to be dreaded on their own account, but peculiarly fearful as the precursors of this great adversary.

As these are his forerunners, so he has innumerable and dreadful instruments for destruction. The famine and the pestilence are in his hand; he kindles the fury of the battle, and riots in the field of slaughter; he wings the forked lightning, and expands the jaws of the devouring earthquake. The air we breathe, the elements by which we are supplied, and the food upon which we subsist, are often converted into the instruments of death: he levies a contribution upon all; and extracts the poison of mortality from that which is given for the sustenance of life.

* Heb. ix. 27.

Death is called, not only an enemy, but the "last enemy." This is introduced principally to denote the completeness of the Redeemer's conquest: nothing remains after the last.

This is the last enemy of the church of God in its collective capacity. Persecution shall cease, affliction be removed, fears and terrors of conscience quelled, temptations overcome, and Satan subdued: still the triumphs of death will remain; a large portion of what the Lord has redeemed will remain under his dominion; the bodies of believers will continue in the grave till the final consummation of all things. Though Jesus Christ extends his sceptre over all nations, and all kingdoms become the kingdoms of God and his Christ,—though millions of the faithful shall reign with him, and rejoice over every other enemy, and hope to rejoice over this,—yet the vestiges of his conquests shall remain legible in the graves of the saints, and on the tombs and monuments of the just.

Death is also the last enemy of every believer. The christian obtains a hope of pardon; he goes on conquering one temptation after another, "from strength to strength," from victory to victory; but he knows that, after all, his body must come under the power of this enemy, and remain for a season in his dark domain. 'I have,' says he 'been carried through many trials; I have surmounted many difficulties; I have triumphed over many powerful temptations; but the dying part still remains: I have still a scene to pass through, in which I must be left alone; no friendly hand to guide or support me. I must engage, singly, with an enemy, whom all men dread, and whose power no *man* comprehends, for it is invisible. He smites with an unseen hand: and, though millions have passed through the conflict, not one has returned to tell the secrets of his power, and to unveil his territory; which, after so many ages, remains, as to us, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself."' Though the christian does not sink into despair as he meets the last enemy and the hour of contest approaches, yet he frequently trembles; for he knows not

what may occur before that triumph is afforded which puts the seal of perpetuity to all the other triumphs of his soul.

To other men, what ought I to say of the last enemy? However long they have escaped his power, he will meet them at last; when they are giddy with intoxicating pleasures; or walking on the heights of boundless ambition; or are the slaves of an avarice, rapacious as the grave: when they imagine they have nothing to fear, when "they have more than heart can wish, and their eyes stand out with fatness," they find an enemy coming upon them "like an armed man;" they find in death all that is terrible; they are forced to encounter the *last* enemy—an enemy that must be conquered, or they must be defeated and lost for ever and ever.

II. We are to consider the manner, and the successive stages, in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer, this last enemy. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."* Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed.

Consider the degrees and stages by which Jesus Christ conquers death.

1. By his incarnation and passion he purchased a right, in behalf of the human race, to conquer death and to triumph over it. Power and right are two distinct things; and, among men, the former is frequently opposed to the latter. A man may have power to do what he has no right to do. Jesus Christ, as God, had power to put down death; but it was necessary, in order that it might be put down fitly and properly, that such an expiation should be made as would remove the guilt on account of which mankind were doomed to die. "It became him,"—there was a fitness, a congruity in the measure,—"it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."† Not perfect with respect to his moral character, but perfectly fitted for his work; sustaining, by

* 1 Cor. xv. 25. † Heb. ii. 10.

his sufferings, the penalty his people had incurred, and thus acquiring an indisputable right to conduct them through every scene of life and death to his kingdom and glory. Remember, the moral consequence of sin is death. It was impossible that this enemy should be put down unless some way could be found to expiate our offences, that the transgressors might be freed from the penalty which, being transferred, was sustained by a surety. It was Jesus Christ, who, in consequence of uniting in his person the nature of God and man, interposed between man and God, "to make an end of sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."* This he accomplished by his incarnation and suffering. His incarnation rendered him capable of suffering, and his divinity stamped an infinite value upon the sufferings of his humanity. Thus the weakness of his flesh united with the dignity of his Godhead to procure the ransom of mankind from their subjection to death. His Father "laid help upon him as one that is mighty," "he exalted one chosen out of the people:"† "this is his servant whom he upholds, his elect in whom his soul delighteth."‡

This enemy, according to the established and eternal rules of the divine government, could not be encountered and overcome but by one who was willing to yield, for a season, to his power. He that would conquer death for us, must invade his territories, pass the threshold of his cavern, become an inhabitant or a sojourner in his domains: and to this Jesus submitted. By death, "he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."§ Thus, by weakness, he became "mighty to save." His sufferings and death upon the cross laid those deep and immoveable foundations on which the fabric of immortality is firmly built.

2. Jesus Christ, by his Spirit, gives the earnest and the pledge of victory over the last enemy: he takes away

* Dan. ix. 24
† Psalm lxxxix. 19.
‡ Isaiah xlii. 1.
§ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

the power of sin, which is the sting of death, and he communicates the principle of life. Whoever is enabled, through the Spirit, to lay hold of Jesus Christ by faith, lays hold of him who is the "resurrection and the life." "Whosoever believeth in me shall never die."* Thus our Saviour taught, to the confusion of the Jews: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."† Thus they shall never taste of death; that bitter taste, which lies in the dread of its consequences, they shall not experience, as those do who know not Christ and have not his Spirit. They who flee into the arms of the Saviour, who appropriate, by faith, the fruits of his death, become, thereby, living members of their living head; they have the "earnest of the purchased inheritance;" they enjoy peace with God, a holy superiority over their "last enemy;" and, as they advance to the contest, can triumphantly exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"‡ They know him to be a destroyer only of that which must be destroyed; and that even the body, though it moulder to dust, shall rise again. Their souls are also inlaid with blessed principles, so as to be prepared for a glorious immortality. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you;"§ and

* John xi. 25, 26.
† John vi. 54–58.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 55.
§ Rom. viii. 9—11.

by these influences they shall become meet subjects of eternal purity and happiness.

Thus Jesus Christ shall go on reigning till every portion of the power of death is abolished. The penalty of death is conditionally abolished in favour of the whole, so that it is proclaimed throughout the world, that "whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall never perish, but have everlasting life."* And there is an earnest of immortality in the believer: as Jesus Christ, our substitute, took possession of immortality, and "became the first-fruits of them that slept,"† so all his saints have in themselves an inward pledge, like that which Christ had on earth, an earnest of their alliance to eternal life.

3. When these preparatory measures have taken place, the empire of death shall be sapped to the foundation, and its power be utterly destroyed. It has, indeed, been a widely extended empire, founded on, or spreading over, the ruins of all other empires: it has comprehended within its domains all the seed of Adam; it has continued from age to age. Compared with the length of its existence, the boasted eternal duration of the Roman city and empire is as nothing. But the final stroke will produce the entire overthrow of this wide and lasting dominion. The chapter from which the text is taken treats of this. He who first, by his death, gave us a right to this victory, He who, by giving the earnest of the Spirit, raised us to a holy superiority over our enemy, will at last vanquish him by that almighty energy by which he is "able even to subdue all things unto himself."‡ He will then "fashion these vile bodies like unto his own glorious body;" he will stand forth as the pattern by which believers shall be formed. They that are earthy continue, like the first man, earthy; but believers, who once bore the image of the earthy, shall then bear the complete image of the heavenly. "The first man is of the earth," but "the second man is the Lord from heaven."§ He has the capacity of everlasting existence; a well-spring of life from which life will be supplied to all his brethren. In the epistle to the Thessalonians, which is the first that was written by this apostle, he says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."* He does not mean to teach us here that they shall rise before the wicked, however true that may be; but that they shall rise before those who are alive shall be changed: "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."† The first effect of divine power will be to raise the dead in a moment, to call forth those that sleep in the dust, to make "the sea give up the dead that are in it;" to loosen the tombs and open the sepulchres that have been closed for ages over the dust of the saints: *then* "they which are alive shall be changed." He recurs to the same subject in the chapter whence the text is taken: "Behold," says he, "I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."‡ The last trump, which shall give notice of the change of those that are alive, is here distinguished from the former trumpet, at the sounding of which the dead shall be raised. Thus the Saviour, by one voice, uttered with greater majesty than when he said, "Lazarus, come forth," will raise the dead, and by a second he will

* John iii. 16. † 1 Cor. xv. 20.
‡ Phil. iii. 21. § 1 Cor. xv. 47

* 1 Thess. iv 13—16. † 1 Thess. iv. 17.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

change the living; so that all will be prepared to be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air."

Thus the empire of death, which has suffered a slow decay, which it has required so many ages to overthrow, which has often seemed to recover from its defeats, will at last sink by one powerful stroke, never to rise again. It will not require more than a moment of time to raise all the dead, to lay open every supulchre, to restore every particle of dust that is fit to be restored, to its proper body, and for all the bodies of the saints to be prepared for the mansions of eternal glory. How insipid and tame are the histories of all other conquest,—of the rise and fall of all other kingdoms and empires,—when compared with the grand and wonderful achievements of the "King Immortal," and the fall of death beneath his power, and the giving up of all his prey;—when every victim from earth and sea, though under monuments of marble, nay, rocks of adamant, shall be restored;—when he shall bring forth every particular form to be repossessed by its proper spirit, from which it has been for a season divorced! He will "swallow up death in victory," and then clothe his redeemed with garments of immortality. Death shall be known and feared no more. Millions of millions shall join in everlasting praises to him whom all the redeemed will then acknowledge as their great Deliverer.

My dear brethren, what is the proper improvement of this subject? To raise our eyes in adoration and gratitude to the blessed Saviour, who will fulfil the threatening, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."* "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us."† Lift up your eyes, ye saints, in love and praise to the glorious Redeemer. He hath reconciled you by his blood; defeated your spiritual enemies, and excited in you the liveliest hopes of immortality. What remains for you is infinitely greater than what you possess. "Be-

Hosea xiii. 14. † Rom. viii. 37.

loved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* What is the proper frame of spirit for you to cherish? To have your conversation in heaven, to be "looking for, and hasting to, the coming of the Son of God."

How great, my brethren, are the privileges you enjoy! Have you any need to struggle and scramble for the perishing riches of this world? Will you "load yourselves with thick clay?" Will you murmur and repine if you are disappointed in your expectation of worldly good, or if you are deprived of what you once enjoyed? Will you forget "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." The pledge is granted to you now. Your Elder Brother, at the right hand of the throne, has taken possession for you. Will you suffer yourselves to be corrupted by the "lusts of the flesh, and of the eye, and the pride of life," while you have heaven open to you view, and the promise of eternal life laid before you? It doth not indeed "appear," at present "what you shall be;" there is not scope on earth for the display of such glory; the glory of the eternal world must come down, before we can fully know what "God hath prepared for them that love him." Your glory would be too great to be sustained by flesh and blood; these cannot enter into the kingdom but at the redemption of the body. Then shall be the "manifestation of the sons of God;" the meanest christian will appear as a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; every saint will arise and shine as the sun in the kingdom of his heavenly Father. At his powerful voice, that penetrates the grave and agitates the dust, all shall shine forth with a lustre which will extinguish all sublunary glory.

How, also, ought these considerations to elevate believers above the sorrows and afflictions of time! The

* 1 John iii. 2.

apostle, when speaking of the same solemn event, in the passage from the Thessalonians which I have already quoted, adds, "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." This indeed is substantial comfort; this is the balm of every wound: this supports us under the stroke that bereaves us of our dearest friends and relatives. Those who have followed the remains of christians to the grave, have, amidst their sorrows, nourished heavenly hope, and enjoyed consolation sufficient to make them almost the objects of envy.

And this enemy is the "last enemy:" when *he* is destroyed, the field will be quite clear; the vast field of eternity will be free from every molestation. The mind may travel on as far as imagination can extend, and nothing will arise to discourage. This is the "last enemy;" leaving nothing more to be feared: all sin shall be absolved, the powers of darkness banished, evil inclinations eradicated, and the world destroyed. When death is vanquished, all his precursors, appendages, and consequences, shall fall with him; nothing remains but salvation, unalloyed bliss, glory, and eternal life,—an everlasting monument to the honour of the mighty Conqueror of death. Well may he be styled the "King of kings," and the "Lord of lords;" worthy to receive a name, a "new name," exalted "above every other name," "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess"* him to be Lord of all! Never was there another being, much less a being in our nature, who ever thought of gaining such a victory, ever thought of lifting up a weapon, or aiming a stroke, in such a conflict. But Jesus has "led captivity captive;"† he has swallowed up death in victory.

I speak to dying men, and cannot conclude without addressing a word to those who have no acquaintance with Christ, no vital union with him, no comfort in his promises. You may have surmounted many difficulties, been conducted through scenes of trial, gained some advantage over certain enemies, obtained great prosperity

* Phil. ii. 9—11. † Eph. iv. 8.

in the world, and may be ready to say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but forget not that there is another enemy yet to contend with; that a dreadful battle remains to be fought, and by no power of your own can you overcome. There is an adversary at the *end* of your path: he adds to the tyranny all the caprice which is common to arbitrary powers; he delights to strike into the dust those who are most exalted; he loves to shoot his arrows at a shining mark, and suddenly to fall upon those who are least apprehensive.

Whether you are aware of this enemy or not, whether you foresee his approach or not he will meet you, and engage you in a greater conflict than you have ever yet sustained. You must conquer, or be defeated and lost for ever. But you have no power to overcome, to appease, to deceive, to turn away, or to escape from this strong adversary. There is, however, a proclamation proceeding from the Saviour, in the gospel: "I am the resurrection, and the life; whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."* "The hour is coming, when they that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth."† "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."‡ "Wherefore, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" their spirits repose in his bosom; even their dust is precious in his sight, and he watches over it till he shall fashion it anew; and, in body and spirit, they shall be heirs of immortality and partakers of his glory for ever and ever.

What then remains for my dying hearers? Some of you will, perhaps, never hear another sermon; all are liable soon and suddenly to fall; none of you can escape, none can find comfort but in the Saviour, and in his gospel. What then remains? What is your wisdom? What does sound common sense dictate, but that you should make an immediate application to the Saviour, and place an entire confidence in him; that you should pray for his Spirit, and seek its constant guidance? Let me

* John xi. 25, 26. † John v. 28, 29 ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

entreat you that are young to consider that your covenant with death will soon be at an end. Youth is often the victim of this enemy; and he, whom they think will come late, because he is the last enemy on earth, frequently levels those to the dust who bid fair to flourish for years to come.

Some of you have advanced far in the path of life; grey hairs are here and there upon you; others observe your approach to the cave of the last enemy;—the feebleness of your voice, the wrinkles on your forehead, the decay of your vigour, forebode your last conflict, while you are buried amidst the cares of life, and think nothing of death. "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation," that men so near to eternity will not look to the Saviour, nor direct a single thought to heaven, nor offer up one prayer to secure the immortal crown.

Prepare for death! You cannot be prepared but by repentance and faith. "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:"* not merely to hear of Christ, or speak of him, or profess him; but to *know* him: to have fellowship with him; to have an interest in him; to receive him as your friend, while you submit to his sceptre. If you have not yet submitted to the Saviour, when you come to the end of life, what can you carry with you? What can you retain but an immortal nature, a consciousness of right and wrong, and therefore of your own deserts?—an awful responsibility!

"After death is the judgement." What is to shield you in judgement from the stroke of vengeance? Have you been hearing the calls of the gospel, sabbath after sabbath, without regarding them? Have you not applied the truth to yourselves? O, retreat now from the snares of the world; shut your eyes upon the scenes of time, on which they must soon be closed for ever. Converse with the world to come; endeavour to yield to the power of it: look at "the things which are not seen;" walk, as it

* John xvii. 3.

were, upon the borders of the ocean of eternity, and listen to the sound of its waters till you are deaf to every sound besides.

The blessed Saviour, who, when he was upon earth, raised the dead and healed all manner of diseases, is able to heal your spiritual maladies, and to raise you from the dead. He is exalted for this purpose: the "river of life" flows from his side; he invites you to partake of it; "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."* In the blessed Saviour are all the springs of pardon, grace, and everlasting consolation; he will guide you through every scene, give you victory over death, admit you through the gates into the city, and there he will "wipe away all tears from your eyes;"† he will dwell with you, and you with him; and you shall be "kings and priests unto God" for ever.

When you meet with the next suggestion to infidelity, the next temptation to sin, ask whether those who tempt you can confute the declarations of Jesus Christ; whether they can give such evidence of the falsehood, as he gives of the truth, of his sayings; whether they can offer any thing that is worthy of being put in competition with the blessings he promises: whether all the world affords,—even if it could be prolonged to eternity, which cannot be,—would be equal to the blessings of eternal and heavenly glory? If not, turn from them; spurn them away; "lay hold on eternal life," and say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Rev. xxi. 4.

X.

THE SUCCESS OF MISSIONS DEPENDS UPON THE AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT.*

[PREACHED AT THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE, OCTOBER 6, 1819.]

ISA. xxxii. 13—15.—*Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city; because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

THIS chapter contains a very evident prophecy of the appearance and the kingdom of Christ, as you may perceive by referring to the first part of it. Contrary to what might be expected, the prophet turns aside; and, instead of finishing the painting of that beautiful scene of things which might be anticipated as the effect of this appearance, he proceeds to paint a scene of great desolation, of great barrenness, in the words which have now been read to you. Agreeably to this, the actual effect of our Saviour's manifestation, with respect to the people to whom he more immediately came, was by no means such as might be expected. After gathering a few out of that nation, and thus planting the first christian church, God retired from them on account of their impenitence and unbelief; and the land is still abandoned to that desolation and barrenness which are here represented.

Under these figures we are probably principally called to notice the spiritual barrenness, the spiritual blindness, hardness, and impenitence of heart, which have befallen that despised people, and under which they at present labour. It is said, in the words now read, that this unhappy state will continue to a certain point of time, or rather till the arrival of a certain important event;—that

* Printed from the notes of W. B. Gurnev. Esq., collated and blended with those of the Rev. S. Hillyard

event is predicted in the last verse. If it were asked the prophet, How long shall the predicted state of desolation last? he answers, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Thus the prophet teaches us, that the desolations will not come to an end, until in consequence of great changes, and the improvement of the moral condition of men, there shall arise a state of prosperity by which the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and that which is now so esteemed, shall be counted in comparison a forest.

Though the immediate bearing of these words is, in all probability, upon the state and prospects of the Jewish people; yet, by parity of reasoning, it may be extended much farther, and may be considered as assigning the reason why the nations of the earth continue in so wretched a state, with respect to things spiritual and divine, as that which they now exhibit; and they may be considered as directing our expectations, and regulating our confidence, respecting the final termination of this state of things; teaching that it will come to an end,—that a great and beneficial change will take place, but not till the Spirit be poured out from on high. Then, and not till then, will "the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Considered in this light, these words bear a very close relation to the subject of our present meeting, and tend to regulate our views and expectations respecting the success of that great work, with a view to the promotion of which we are at this time assembled in the presence of the Almighty; and may allay that dissatisfaction and discontent, so far as it borders on repining, which the comparatively small success attending the proclamation of the gospel in the present times might excite; while it serves to strengthen our faith in the promise of that Being, who, as he has afforded this hope, is abundantly able to accomplish it by that mighty power by which he will "subdue all things unto himself."

The great and momentous truth taught in this passage, you perceive, my brethren, is, that the ultimate success

of missions,—of the proclamation of the gospel, in short in every form,—depends upon the communication of the Spirit; and that its perfect success can be effected only in consequence of that Spirit being "poured down from on high." It is this momentous truth, and the proper improvement of it, to which, on the present occasion, I shall request your serious attention.

That the Spirit of God is afforded at present to the church is evident from its existence; for, since the church is entirely a spiritual structure, raised and preserved by that divine Spirit, if it had been utterly withdrawn, the church would have been annihilated Every member of that church is the production of the Spirit, quickened by the Spirit, and moulded to accord with the foundation-stone upon which, by faith, it is built. We cannot, therefore, for a moment contemplate the total withdrawment of the Spirit of God, either as an event that has taken place since the first proclamation of christianity, or as one that is to be apprehended. We witness many pleasing instances, in our congregations and churches, of divine communications to the mind,—of hearts opened to "receive the truth in the love of it," and brought into willing captivity to Christ; instances as clearly verified as those we read of in the New Testament. But still, though the Spirit of God is not utterly withdrawn, that especial time has not arrived which is here announced; the Spirit is not "poured from on high" in that plenitude and variety of gifts which may be reasonably expected. A few drops of this sacred influence descend here and there; but it by no means descends in so copious a shower, nor so widely diffuses that spiritual fertility which the Scriptures give us reason to anticipate: it is not "poured from on high."

That the success, the ultimate and complete success of missions depends upon the outpouring of the Spirit of God, appears to be manifest from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. This involves a doctrine so familiar to your apprehensions who are acquainted with "the truth as it is in Jesus," that it would be needless to accumulate all the proofs the Scripture would supply; a

few passages only are necessary. Our text is one of this kind. In the prophecies of Isaiah you find frequent passages of Scripture which represent, that the work of diffusing christianity is to be throughout truly the work of God; is to be distinguished as such by every serious spectator. Thus we are told that he will plant "in the wilderness the cedar tree, the shittah tree, and the myrtle and the oil tree, that he will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it;" plainly implying that the bringing in of the heathen nations, as well as the conversion of the Jews, is so much the work of God, that it will be made conspicuous to all true believers.

When the conversion of the Jews, which must be supposed to be effected by the same sort of agency, is announced by the prophet Zechariah, it is in these words: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." The prophet Zechariah, in order to encourage Zerubbabel in the building of the temple,—where an eminent type is presented of the Messiah, the great Restorer of the temple of God, who is announced under the appellation of the True Branch,—says, it is "not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The passage in Joel, when cited by St. Peter* on the day of Pentecost, he refers to the events of that day; and though this may seem to break in upon our doctrine, yet, when truly considered, it confirms it; for we are not to consider this as fulfilled merely at one period, but at different stages; as verified at different eras, and as pointing out a steady series of operations of the Divine Being, effected by the same sort of agency, and for the same purpose, at different periods of the gospel dispensation, all comprehended under the general term, "*the last days.*" If mere human agency would avail, no reason can be assigned why it should not have been sufficient, at that time, for the conversion of the Jews; as well as for the conversion of the Gentiles at present. But we know that the conversion of the Jews was the effect of the miraculous effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and we have reason to suppose there will be a like effusion, before the consummation of all things; one which will realise more fully the prediction of the prophet Joel: for he does not change one man by one means, and another by one that is totally different; and one nation by one kind of agency, and another by another; but the mode in which he proceeds, and the nature of the materials employed, are, with regard to Him, just as uniform as the nature of the work to be accomplished. Wherever the diffusion of the gospel is presented to us in the Old Testament, in a course of prophetic annunciation, the hand of God is always the object to which it is referred; it is perpetually claimed as his work; and the most magnificent expressions are used to represent this work in distinction from any other. The prophet Jeremiah declares that a new covenant shall be made, distinct from that made with their forefathers, by which God will undertake to put his "law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; that he will be their God, and that they shall be his people." Who can possibly suppose this can intend any thing else but the real agency of the Spirit of God? For by what words can that be

* Acts ii. 17.

more aptly represented than by the Divine Spirit, who wrote with his own finger, on the stony tables, the words of the law, and who will inscribe his precepts on "the fleshly tables of the heart?" When the Divine Being informs the Jews, that after a long series of desolations and judgements, he shall bring to a close their captivities, painting it in very delightful colours, he says, "And I will no more hide my face from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."*

In the New Testament, we learn that the great Captain of our salvation did not encounter the powers of darkness, or enter upon his work, till he was anointed by the Spirit of God: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bound, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He, though a personage of such a divine and extraordinary character, yet, considered as an instrument in this work, (with reverence be it spoken,) was not qualified for it till the Spirit had descended upon him; and, when he went into the wilderness, he was filled with the Spirit. His apostles also were made fit for their work by the effusion of the Spirit from on high, on the day of Pentecost; till that time they were not qualified for their work in the nations to which they were to be sent. And though I am aware it may be said, this respects the conferring of miraculous gifts, yet, be it recollected, that we find as great a change in the moral state of the disciples; from being ignorant, secular, and pusillanimous, they were brought into a most blessed frame of mind; they were truly enlightened, and transformed at once into heroes of zeal and piety. There appeared as great a change in their affections and hearts: they were as much purified and refined from their former selves, as they were distinguished by the possession of miraculous gifts.

* Ezek. xxxix. 29.

Wherever the apostles had any distinguished success in the ministry of the gospel, they certainly remind us of its being effected by a divine agency. If they preached with success at Antioch, where it appears that their ministry was attended with great benefit, it is announced in these words: "And the hand of the Lord was with them." When Paul had preached the gospel to the heathen after having been committed with Barnabas to the work of the Lord to which they were sent, they represented to the church "how God had opened a way to the Gentiles:" and the Jewish christians were compelled, we are told, to magnify the grace of God in communicating this blessing to them; and they did it in these words: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." If Lydia was converted to the faith of Christ, we are told it was because "the Lord had opened her heart to attend to the things that were spoken." How clear and decided, again, is the language of Paul, when speaking on this subject!—"Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase; so then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Sincere and faithful preachers of the gospel, then, as far as they have been successful in the work, even from the very beginning, from the first communication of divine truth, have uniformly represented it as the work of God, as the work of his Spirit, independent of the instrumentality which he employed in the ministry of the word: those instruments themselves considered it as the work of God to confer success on their labours by the power of his Spirit. It is evident, from the nature of the thing, that it must be so; for, considering the state of man, it is impossible to suppose that any thing less than a divine power can change the heart. If the state of man be a state of trespasses and sins,—if "the carnal mind be enmity against God,"—how is it possible that from such elements as these can spring pure and ardent love to the Divine Being, but in consequence of a divine power? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Were it

the design of God merely to build on a foundation already laid, or to repair a dilapidated edifice, one might talk of the efficacy of human suasion; but when that which is to be done is to create a new principle, to pour new life into the soul, to give "a new heart," to plant new seeds in a soil where all has been barrenness and desolation, to turn the waters into new channels, to effect a total change of heart and character,—what can accomplish all this but an almighty power? Hence the Scriptures represent it as a creation of new organs; giving eyes to see and ears to hear, that we may see, and hear, and understand, and feel, as we never did before. It is represented as quickening the dead, and this "according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ Jesus, when he raised him from the dead." Thus "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Faith is the great principle of this change, and *it* is "the gift of God," and is of grace; for, "by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "To you," says the same apostle, "it is *given*, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." What is more manifest than that this language implies that believing is always the effect of divine grace? We allow, indeed, most cheerfully and thankfully that the gospel is the instrument of God, and wonderfully fitted by him for his work; but even *it* is nothing more than an instrument; and when it is successful and baffles every human effort exerted against it, it is beeause it is wielded by an omnipotent arm. The gospel of God, when directed by the wisdom of God and urged by his energy, none can withstand.

Human suasion can operate only on principles which already exist. When Demosthenes, with his powerful eloquence, excited the Athenians to combat, he only called into action, by a skilful grouping of motives, and an appropriate exercise of his genius, principles already existing, but which had lain dormant. He created nothing new; he transformed them not into new creatures; but only roused and stimulated those principles which had animated the bosoms of nations in resisting

tyranny in every age. But when the apostles went forth to preach faith in Christ, they enforced and demanded, if I may so say, a state of things of which there had been no instance:—they proposed to make a change in the mind and heart of man to which there was no natural tendency; they required a creature "dead in trespasses and sins" to awake to Christ; they proposed to convert him into a devoted servant, a subject most loyal, most affectionate, and ardent: and how was it possible that mere human art or force could effect such changes as these?

It is worthy of observation, that those who have had the greatest success in preaching the gospel in heathen nations, as well as in christian lands, have ever been the most deeply convinced of this important truth; a truth they enforced in every stage of the progress of the gospel, and which, instead of producing discouragement, only awakened greater ardour: their strength appeared only to lie in an implicit confidence in Him whose energy is all-sufficient, and who has so fully declared his willingness to exert it. Thus, Brainerd, and Schwartz, and Eliot, and those in every age who have had the greatest success in turning men to righteousness, have been the first to declare that they were nothing. They of all men, most ardently implored, and most entirely depended upon, the agency we are now contemplating; and their success appears to have been more in proportion to their earnest solicitude in seeking this blessing, this divine agency, than to any other cause whatsoever. Now, if we see men accomplish a great and extraordinary work, and those who are most successful in it ascribing their success to a particular cause, would it not be presumption in us, who know nothing of the matter, to doubt their testimony? If success were to be considered as a test as to the manner in which the effect has been produced, in what other instances are persons who are mere spectators, who have taken no care to collect information on the subject, held to be better judges than those who have "borne the burden and heat of the day," and have had in proportion to their success, the deepest consciousness that they were nothing,—that they merely "planted and watered, but that it was God who gave the increase?"

Those who do not believe there is any agency of the Spirit of God, are so conscious that nothing else can produce the desired effect, that they do not venture into the field; but, while they despair of the conversion of men, deal out scorn upon such as are engaged in the work. They are chiefly those who either dispute against, or practically trifle with, the agency of the Spirit;—who are conscious they have no adequate power; and yet, while they feel this, pity, or affect to pity, the persons who depend on resources with which they are unacquainted, and whose value, therefore, they are unable to estimate. This is a plain matter of fact.

There is a class of professed christians in this country, (I would not use any invidious terms,) who formally deny the great doctrine of the influence of the Spirit; and, with regard to that denomination generally, containing many men of great talents and high respectability, what has been their conduct—what the sentiments they have evinced? A complete hopelessness of the least success, and a corresponding inactivity in calling on the idolater to abandon his idols, and wait for the Son of God from heaven. Look at those classes of christians who are disposed to feel the greatest distrust of the conversion of the heathen. Is not that distrust founded on a real disbelief of the agency of the Spirit? Hence they satisfy themselves with cavilling at the supposed insufficiency of the instruments employed, on the supposition that those persons are agents; while they themselves feel that they are no more than the pencil, the style, by which the Lord engraved the precepts on "the tables of stone," and that they are that by which the Spirit of God writes it "upon the fleshly tables of the heart." Look, on the other hand, at the history of those who have been the most successful missionaries to the heathen, and see whether you cannot trace certain results for which you cannot account on any other hypothesis than that most momentous one of a divine influence, at cer-

tain periods, accompanying their labours. In the history of Brainerd and Eliot, and others, you perceive that for a considerable time, there seem to have been the same efforts employed, the same doctrines taught, the same earnest and zealous prayers, and the same watchfulness over their own hearts, and yet no saving effect produced on others: all still remained barren; no desirable movement of the heart was excited; and this continued for a long period. Such was the state of things when Brainerd first undertook the mission to the Indians: but, after a considerable time, while he was propounding only the same doctrines, and using only the same means, the Spirit of God appeared to put forth its energy, and divine communication was imparted at one season "like a rushing, mighty wind," at others, "like the dew and the rain from heaven," softening and thus opening, the heart which had resisted the entrance of sacred truth, and causing the tear of genuine penitence to steal down the cheek. Nobody could doubt that there was some one greater than a missionary there; —that the Spirit of God had changed the barren soil to sacred ground, and had wetted it, like "Gideon's fleece, with the dews of heaven." And so it is, my brethren, that every person who has had any long acquaintance with the christian ministry, is aware that there are certain periods of barrenness, and certain periods for bearing fruit. The same talents, whether great or small, may be brought into action; but there shall be some seasons in which no good shall be crowned with extraordinary success.

There are two reasons why we are in danger, even if we believe this doctrine, of losing sight of its true bearing and importance.

In the first place, one reason why it is difficult to depend, as we ought, on the agency of the Spirit, and yet continue active, is, that it is not matter of consultation, and that it cannot immediately and directly enter into the regulation of the choice of expedients, or the adoption of measures. It is altogether an affair, a secret, of the Divine Being: it cannot, in any degree, be

subjected to our control, and, therefore, it cannot be the subject of our counsel. We are called upon to exert ourselves as much in the same way, to employ the same sort of instrumentality, to set on foot the same means, as though there were no such doctrine existing in our creed, and no such expectation existing in our minds. The consequence is, we are very apt to lose sight, even while strenuously attending to our duty, in some measure, of that mysterious and divine agency on which the success of all our efforts must depend. The most busy husbandman is not always the one who sees most clearly his dependence on the sun or the rain: and while good men may be exerting their utmost prudence, and their utmost zeal, for the diffusion of christianity among the heathen, they are in great danger of losing sight of their dependence on the invisible agency of the Divine Spirit, in directing their attention exclusively to the apparatus they are setting in motion.

Another reason probably is, that this is an invisible power; whereas our own actions and plans are objects of distinct observation. The energy of the Divine Spirit is to be seen only in its effects. It is a mysterious hidden agency; while the plans we form furnish objects of sensation and observation: and such is the miserable littleness of the human mind, after all, that we are more struck with "sparks of our own kindling," than with the light of heaven;—more occupied in looking at the instrumentality, than in impressing upon our minds the mysterious and potent energy of the Almighty. It is one thing to *believe* that there is an agency of the Spirit, and gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, to render christianity beneficial to men; and quite another thing to have *a deep and practical persuasion* of it, and to regulate all our feelings and expectations, on the momentous subject of converting the world, by a continual reference to this most interesting truth.

Here, then, permit me, for a few moments, to point out what appears to be the proper practical improvement of the truth, that the success of missions depends on the agency of the Divine Spirit. If this be a fact, my

brethren, it necessarily teaches us our dependence on God, and, consequently it ought to engage us to attempt the work of evangelizing the heathen, with the greatest humility, and the most profound annihilation of self; with a perfect renunciation of our own strength and of our own resources. These are absolute prerequisites to a true dependence on God. While we use our own resources, we must, in a measure, distrust them, and pray to God that we may use them aright. We can do nothing towards putting in motion the only agency from which any permanent result of the right kind can flow. I say nothing, absolutely nothing: and yet we must exert our instrumentality; for mere instruments are nothing, apart from the divine agency included in the promise. Separate from the hand which wields us,—from the volition of the Divine Being,—and from the agency of that Spirit which is included in this promise,—we are, I repeat it, absolutely nothing. Any false confidence, therefore, such as suggests itself probably to men who have been teachers of other sciences,—any of that elation of mind, or confidence in our own strength, which has given, perhaps, nerve and elevation to human courage,—is out of place here. The apostle was the greatest of all men in this matter: but how was he affected? He tells the Corinthians, that he was with them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;" his work was watered with tears and with prayer; he felt himself a worm in the presence of the great Agent: and hence it was that he was enabled to "thresh mountains." There was always in his mind a deep sentiment of humility, and a powerful conviction of the presence of the Divine Being.

The rain is not more necessary to raise the seed, the sun is not more necessary to bring it to maturity, than this work of the Spirit. Hence, I would observe, prayer appears to be of the utmost importance in connexion with every attempt for the conversion of the heathen nations. Prayer appears, indeed, to be the appropriate duty of such as desire their conversion: prayer in the closet; prayer on those seasons on which they are consulting as to their plans of operation. It was while the church at Antioch were waiting on the Lord, and fasting, that the Holy Ghost said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It was by prayer they were commended to the work for which they were designed. If the Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, it was when they were "all with one accord in one place." It appears that, in every period of the world, prayer, a spirit of prayer for this great object, has been the precursor of real success. More than sixty years ago, as several of you are, I doubt not, aware, a union among real christians for extraordinary prayer began to manifest itself. It first appeared in America, and was most warmly recommended by President Edwards: thence it was transferred to Scotland, by the instrumentality of the venerable Dr. Erskine; and from thence into England, by our valuable friend, Dr. Ryland, at the commencement of the baptist mission; and the excellent practice was soon adopted by pious men of other persuasions. Never is a mission more likely to prosper, than when it is begun in the spirit of ardent prayer and supplication. And if ever this spirit departs from us, "the glory is departed" from this mission: if ever we cease to mingle the spirit of devotion with these services, we may succeed in outward means, we may multiply and extend them, but we shall never see the conversion of the heathen. Prayer touches the only spring that can possibly ensure success. By speaking we move man; but by prayer we move God. It is through the medium of prayer that the littleness and meanness of man prevail with Omnipotence. "The prayer of faith" is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields: he looks upon every other power as more or less opposed to him; but he looks upon this as a confession of man's dependence, as an appropriate homage to his greatness, as an attraction which brings down his divine agency to the earth.

Here every one may assist missions: and every tear in the closet, every pang in the heart over the miseries of those who are dead in their sins, every prayer lifted

up in that retirement where no eye sees but the eye of Him "which seeth in secret," affords a most important benefit. These are the elements of success; these the pledges of final triumph. You know it has been customary for a considerable time, for a special season of prayer to be set apart in our society, and among christians of other denominations, for the conversion of the heathen. On the fervour of these supplications, through the intercession of the great Mediator, will, I have no doubt, depend the final realization of our hopes in the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ.

It necessarily results from the doctrine of the text, that we ought to be exceedingly careful not to "grieve the Spirit of God." He is the great Agent; and we must expect to succeed in proportion only as we shall gratify that Holy Spirit. You know the tempers which grieve that Spirit; you know that "all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil speaking, and bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour," are directly opposed to His nature,—that they are an element in which He never moves; but that meekness, and gentleness, and forgiveness of injuries, and love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and goodness, and faith, and temperance,—that the lamb-like virtues of Jesus Christ, are those in which he delights. You know the graces of the Spirit of God, which he imparted to Jesus Christ, are still the object of his predilection, and that he cannot dwell amongst us any farther than he nourishes those dispositions in us; that He who first gave the Spirit, still gives the same Spirit and no other; we can expect no triumphant success of his gospel, or his kingdom, but in proportion as we are "anointed by the Spirit:" for, as the oil ran down to the skirts of Aaron's garment," so his holy influences anoint the heart of every true disciple. Let us take care, then, that in the management of this mission there be nothing in our conduct or temper opposed to the simplicity and purity of the christian dispensation. Let us take care, as individuals and as churches, that we walk in the fear of the Lord; and that we look thus to have

the consolations of the Holy Ghost, to be edified and multiplied.

There does not appear to me to be a more important maxim than that contained in Luke xvii. 20,—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" or as Doctor Campbell renders it, "*is not ushered in with pomp and parade.*" If this mission is made the instrument of ostentation and gratification, or of amusing the public by a display of gaudy eloquence,—if it is conducted on such a plan as comports rather with the maxims of this world than with "the mind of Christ,"—the usefulness of the society is in that measure destroyed. If it is conducted without prayer, which I am sorry to say has not always been sufficiently regarded, nothing can be more calculated to "grieve the Holy Spirit." My brethren, if we look at the manner in which those missions were first conducted, which converted the whole world, we shall find that they were destitute of all human parade, and were conducted with extraordinary simplicity. It was, as I have said, while the church ministered and fasted that they were directed "to send forth Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto they had been called." There were no places sought out as places of theatrical resort; such things were not thought of at that time; nor *could* they be thought of by those who formed themselves solely upon the simplicity of the Scriptures. It is not my wish to give offence to any persons by these remarks: but I could not discharge my conscience as a minister of Christ without making them; not at all with a view to censuring what has been done, or blaming any individual in the present assembly, but of lifting up my voice against certain dangers to which the corruption of our nature and the state of the world expose us.

All rivalry, also, between different societies for the purpose of promoting missions,—all that rivalry which has not for its object and design the promoting the cause, the knowledge, and the service of God,—is offensive in his sight. Let us guard against that vicious rivalry which shall induce the least disposition to depre-

ciate or hide in silence the success of others; which shall lead us to look coolly on the most splendid acts of missionary labour, unless they emanate from ourselves, or bring honour to our party. All these dispositions, as far as they exist in any individual, or any society, dispositions which are "of the flesh, and not of the Spirit," are directly contrary to the mind of Jesus Christ, who blended a Paul and an Apollos, who blended the Jews and the Gentiles—men of all characters—in one mass, and impressed upon them all the faith of Christ and the love of immortal souls.

It necessarily results from the doctrine of the text, that all dependence on any other resource than that of the communication of the Spirit, will be found to be delusive, when the Divine Being shows us what work is his own. To "put our trust in an arm of flesh," is to renounce our dependence upon him. There cannot be a double dependence, any more than a double adherence. It is true men must be employed; but the fact of their mere instrumentality should never be lost sight of, and their dependence on the Spirit of God should be ever recognised. "The gold is mine," saith the Lord, "and the silver is mine." Let us not speak on this all-important subject in such a manner as to lead to the idea that the obtaining of money, and the setting in motion a vast apparatus, is all that is necessary to secure the salvation of the heathen. Any language like this is in direct opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures. If the Spirit of God be the great agent,—if it be his work, and his work alone, and the whole is accomplished by the energy of that mighty Spirit,—how can we secure success by any other agency? If we should depend on the accumulation of more property, and should succeed in that respect, far beyond our present resources; yet if the Divine Being were to withdraw from us his sacred and enlivening influences, he would leave us in the same situation as he did the Jews, when he said, "Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble."* They

* Jer. ii. 28.

might multiply instruments and extend their labour, but they could not secure the salvation of a single soul—they could not deposit *in the heart* a single sentence of divine truth—they could not form one holy disposition: but if the Spirit of God "be poured out upon us," as we have reason to believe it will be at some time, every other instrument will be subordinated, and must be; and then it will be found that the Divine Being, when he has poured out his Spirit, will never suffer an adequate quantity of property to be wanted. He who has given the Spirit will never suffer his work to be stopped by the want of the riches of the earth: he will sooner turn the very stones of the street into the precious metals, than suffer the means to be wanted of carrying on this work. My brethren, if we can once draw down the Spirit of God on our churches, the rich will contribute their property; the pious will contribute their prayers, and so much of their property as they can afford; and the leisurely will give up their time. This divine agency, when its effects are once really felt in the heart, will enlist into its service every power which men possess, and will compel it to yield its quota. "Thou shalt see, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory."

Finally, I would just observe, that the doctrine of the text teaches us to regulate our confidence with respect to the success of every particular mission, at the same time that it animates that confidence in regard to the final success of the work itself. We cannot say how long the Spirit may be withheld; but that it is withheld, that the outpouring of it has not yet taken place, we have melancholy evidence. It is plain that it has not been

vouchsafed to this society, or to any other, to the extent that we anticipated, so as to produce a total transformation. Great effect has been experienced in the South-Sea islands; and that appears to me to approach the nearest of any thing to what we are expecting; but even that, delightful as it is, is on a small scale. But the general success has not yet seemed proportional to the extent of the means. "The wood is prepared for the altar, but the fire from heaven has not descended upon the sacrifice." The number of missionaries is as great, probably, as that employed at the first promulgation of christianity; but here is the mighty difference,—the Spirit of God, at that period, descended from on high: the Divine Being "bowed the heavens and came down," and infused an immortal energy into the missionaries, to which we are strangers at the present day.

It is proper to inquire, why is not the Spirit of God poured down now?—what is there that has caused the withholding of this Spirit? We may be assured there is some reason. The Divine Being is a sovereign, but he is not a capricious being; and we ought to plead with God, and ask why it is that he withholds from us this Spirit? We may be assured the time will arrive wh ı deliverance will be wrought in the earth; but hitherto we have "brought forth wind,"—only wind. He "hath not wrought deliverance," though we know deliverance will be wrought. May we not, in the spirit of humble supplication, ask, Why that honour is reserved for other nations and other times?—Why we are permitted to see only the skirt of his garment, and not permitted to see his face?—Why he holds back his blessings, and we contemplate only a few drops of that mighty influence of which the heavens are full, and which he might, and doubtless will, pour down in copious torrents? My brethren, let the friends of each society, instead of being led for a moment "to sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag,"—while they are thankful for what has been done,—inquire why they are not permitted to do more, and why the adamantine barriers of impenitence and rejection are permitted to oppose themselves?

Propose this question to the philosopher, and he will repeat the language of the ancient prophet, and say, "Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods?"* We know, my brethren, that no nation ever quitted its gods till Jesus Christ came into the world: we know that no nation has forsaken actual idolatry, much less turned from things present to realise an immortal prospect—to fix its affections on God as the eternal God, except by the energy of the Spirit; but we are encouraged to expect the power and grace of God to accomplish these purposes, and we hear him saying in his word, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this:" and if there be something rendering us unworthy to be the instruments of so great and important a change, let us search it out, and mourn for it before God.

At the same time, my brethren, though we are taught to acquiesce without repining, without murmuring, in the dispensations of God, let us point our views to a future period, when the Spirit will be poured from on high,—when Jesus Christ will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh,—for then "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." The Divine Being will not frustrate the design his Spirit has excited; he will not cause the holy agitations which have been felt to be in vain; he will not suffer those desires which have been excited in the minds of Carey and others to evaporate without being in some manner fulfilled. Great things have been effected by the instrumentality of those who have gone before us, and we are now employed in the same great work. How many thousands are pouring out their prayers and tears for the spiritual conversion of the heathen! There has been a spiritual movement of divine love whereby many have been rendered willing to spend and be spent, yea, to die for the conversion of the Gentile nations; earnestly desiring to conduct them to the Saviour whom they never saw, but "in whom they believed, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable." But when this Spirit has come from on high, we shall wit-

* Jer. ii. 11.

ness a different scene, going far beyond the desire and the effort: then it will be a most glorious æra: we shall see nations casting off their idols, returning to God, "asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward;" then will be again "heard, on the high places, weeping and supplication because they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God:" then there will be heard, not the cry of the wounded, nor the lamentation of the orphan and the fatherless over parents slain in battle, but sorrow of a more sacred nature; a new burthen pressing on the heart—the burthen of sin. They will look back on the sufferings of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and at the cross, and feel as much oppressed as if they had heard his groans and his prayers; they will then believe the simple sayings of God; "the powers of the world to come," the greatness of eternity, will occupy their attention; they will then look "not at the things which are seen and temporal," but at the sublime and glorious "things which are eternal;" the distance between that period and the judgement day will, in thought, be annihilated; they will feel themselves standing on the threshold of the infinite and everlasting mansion, and their whole souls will be absorbed in the nothingness of time, the grandeur of eternity, the awful hurtfulness of sin, and the infinite importance of the great salvation. Those things which we speak of with freezing accents and cold hearts, will then be felt in the inmost soul; conviction will seize upon the transgressors, while others will be rejoicing in the Lord, and it will be as it was at the building of the second temple; "the voice of shouting, and the sound of weeping," will be mingled together, as in the time of Ezra. While troops of pilgrims will be pressing towards the celestial city, many millions of prodigals will return to their Father's house, and will lift up their eyes to the Saviour who died for their sin. These things MUST take place,—they did take place at the first preaching of the gospel, and will again be witnessed. By some, such occurrences would be regarded as disorderly. God be praised, there were such disorders as these, and well would it be for

us were our religious assemblies frequently interrupted by such disorders. The time will come, assuredly, when "the Spirit will be poured from on high;" and who knows what will be the effect when the Divine Being applies the truths of his word to the consciences of his creatures? Then will "the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest:" then, my brethren, all the powers of nature, all the resources of providence, all the advantages that are possessed by men in every variety and state, will jointly contribute to aid the general triumph. "The multitude of camels shall come up: the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord." Kings shall offer their gifts, and the majesty of all earthly sovereigns will bow to the majesty of the Saviour. All the spoils of earthly grandeur will be laid at his feet, and none will be "exalted in that day" but the Lord and his Messiah. This, next to our own salvation, is the highest and most proper object of our solicitude: if we can but attain this,—if we can but witness this,—every thing else will follow: this touches the source and author of all motion; and in proportion as we can engage the Divine Spirit on our side, in that proportion will Omnipotence be exerted, and who can stay his hand?

There are some who do not expect these scenes to be realised; but we say to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."* Before him all difficulties vanish; it is only the exertion of the same sort of power as every sincere christian has witnessed,—the power of which he is himself the subject; and what reason can he assign why he should have been touched by the Divine Spirit,—"made willing in the day of his power,"—and the same power not be rendered effectual in the breasts of others? The same influence which was extended to a Paul, will effect the renovation of the world. No new power is requisite: it is the same: even

* Matt. xxii. 29.

that, without which we might "preach in vain," and you "hear in vain;" it need only to be poured from on high, and then, "the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Let us, then, in our prayers, especially and earnestly entreat this divine communication. Never let us pray for the Baptist Mission, or any other, without recognizing distinctly in our prayers our dependence on the divine agency; never let us for a moment lose sight of this, but direct our attention to it as the main object of expectation and hope,—regarding it as indeed the work of God. It is his especial prerogative to renew the heart of man, and to build up, from the ruins of the fall, a temple to his praise; and when this is accomplished, "all the kingdoms of the earth will flow into it,"—the nations that are saved will walk in the light of it: and how can we, who consider ourselves "the temples of the Holy Ghost," be better employed than in imploring him to "send forth his light and his truth?" Let us address him in the language of the church: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?" "Where is thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies?"* The church of God is now praying to this effect, and the best pledge of the final triumphs of christianity results from the combined influence of prayer and active exertion in a spirit of dependence. Our strong desire that the heathen should be converted, and that christianity should be published and received among all nations, may be regarded, we hope, as the earnest and fruit of that Divine Spirit whose more copious effusion will accomplish the work. Let us welcome the rising beam, "the day-star" that ushers in the morning of a brighter day than has ever yet shone upon the earth. Let us fervently pray that the Divine Spirit may be poured out upon the world, and that the Redeemer may "take to him his great power, and reign" universally in the hearts of men.

* Isaiah li. 9. lxiii. 15.

XI.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS, NOVEMBER 28, 1820.]

MATTHEW xvi. 1—3.—"*The Pharisees also, with the Sadducees came, and tempting him desired that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red: And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*"

So violent were the prejudices excited by our Saviour's preaching, that those who could agree in nothing besides, agreed in the attempt to discredit his authority, and destroy the effects of his ministry. An instance of this is presented in the words just read, in which we find the Pharisees and Sadducees forgetting their mutual antipathy in their common hostility to the pretensions of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees, as you are aware, were a sect among the Jews, who had multiplied to an enormous extent their additions to the law of Moses; which, together with the other parts of the Old Testament, they received as inspired. The Sadducees, a sort of religious sceptics, generally supposed to have confined their belief to the missions and writings of Moses, rejected the doctrines which connect us with a future world; the resurrection of the body, and the existence of spirits. These two parties, at variance on all other occasions, concurred on this; and both, "tempting" our Lord in the hope of ruining his reputation, "desired that he would show them a sign from heaven;" an indication that he was the Messiah, yet more miraculous and convincing, according to *their* idea, than any he had before exhibited. By this "sign from heaven," they probably meant some *direct* manifestation of the divine glory,

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

without that intervention of second causes which seems to have impaired in their minds the impression of the miracles they had witnessed. They imagined that an *immediate* vision of the Divine Majesty would afford an evidence of his being the Messiah, more unequivocal and satisfactory than could be afforded by any performances however supernatural. Such a notion was delusive, and arose entirely from the depraved and obdurate state of their minds. When we find those, who are already in possession of sufficient evidence, yet demanding more than is given, we may be sure that, in such cases, no evidence would be sufficient. Accordingly, it is not the practice of the divine government to comply with such unreasonable desires: but, while *he that hath*, or that improves his present advantages, *shall receive abundantly more: from him that hath not*, or that uses not what he has, *even that which he hath shall be taken away.*

From the suggestion of the words first read, I propose to consider some of the most obvious and palpable signs which the present age exhibits of the advancement of our Saviour's kingdom: and I shall take occasion to remark previously, that it is an important part of wisdom, —a duty which as christians we ought not to neglect,— to *discern the signs*, to watch the moral aspect, of the times in which we live. We are not, indeed, called or qualified to penetrate into futurity; but we may study with advantage that portion of providence, in relation to the church and the world, with which we are most nearly connected.

Of the benefits to be derived from this study, the first is, that we shall thus learn more of *the intentions and character of the Divine Being.* The providence of God is the execution and developement of his mind. In observing the course of providence, we see the operations of his hand, and read his will as truly in its fulfilment as in his written revelation. Again: our *devotion* should be modified, to a certain extent, by the signs of the times. In our prayers we may derive encouragement from these to plead with God for the accomplishment of his own gracious designs and promises: we may adapt

our humiliation to the demand of the season; acknowledge the hand that wards off impending evils or crowns us with signal favours; and be reminded what benefits we may appropriately implore. And, once more: such a habit of advertence to the prominent features of the age, may be useful in the regulation of our *active* duties. In our exertions to promote the good of mankind and the glory of God, we are not merely to regard his general will as applicable to all times alike; we are to inquire also, his particular design in reference to the existing state of things; to study what he would have us do at such a particular crisis. Does He appear, for instance, by various concurring events, to be preparing for the more extensive and rapid diffusion of the gospel? Then it becomes our appropriate duty to provide whatever means seem the best adapted to promote that transcendent object. Some persons who are sufficiently attentive to the more private details of christian duty, take but little interest in the fortunes of the universal church: a failure which, in such cases, arises principally from that inattention to the signs of the times, reprehended by our Saviour in the text.

Having offered these suggestions, I shall now advert to some plain, unequivocal, signs and indications of the present age. I call them plain and unequivocal, in distinction from such as may be thought of an ambiguous character. With respect to some of these signs, while events are passing by us, there may be differences of sentiment; differences which will probably disappear when another generation shall look back upon our own times. In contemplating an object, we find it necessary to recede to a certain distance, in order that we may the more comprehensively survey what pressed too closely, and became too prominent, during our nearer approach; and thus the present portion of providence will be better understood, in all its bearings, when the events which compose its principal features shall have been for some time passed. The following remarks, however, will be confined to the most striking peculiarities of the present age.

1. Of these, the first I shall mention is, the great in-

crease of mental exertion. Some periods have been marked by intellectual inaction: the human mind has appeared as in a state of torpor and dormancy: not a luminary has broken the prevailing darkness; not a distinguished name has been left behind: knowledge has been not merely stationary, it has not merely not been progressive, it has *retrograded.* Such was that period in which, after the decline of the Platonic philosophy, Aristotle reigned in all the schools, and was idolized as the secretary of nature, who dipt his pen in intellect. From his dictates there was no appeal; and, what was most remarkable, his empire extended to theology. As nothing can convey a higher idea of the intellectual greatness of that extraordinary man, than the unrivalled despotism he then exercised over human minds, so nothing can present a more humiliating picture of the weakness of those minds, than the depth of mental degradation to which they thus descended. The Reformation was the great instrument in undermining and demolishing that long-established system of intellectual despotism and degradation. Under the light diffused by the reformers, men awoke from the trance of ignorance and infatuation in which they had slept for ages; they felt those energies of thought and reason which had been so long disused; they began to investigate truth for themselves; they started to that career of genius and science which has ever since been rapidly advancing. Had this been the only benefit it produced, the protestant reformation would deserve to be numbered among the noblest achievements of mental energy: viewing it in this light, even infidels have applauded Luther and his associates.

Since that era the greatest advances have been made in every department of science, physical and moral; more especially during the last century, in which the progress of knowledge has been more rapid than, perhaps, during any similar period of human history. In addition even to the grand discoveries of Newton, respecting the laws of nature and the system of the universe, such a mass of varied information has been accumulated, that Newton himself, could he witness the present state of his own science, would be astonished at advances he never anticipated. Every year, nay, almost every day, has added something; while the registers of discovery have found it no easy task to keep pace with the rapidity of its march. The nomenclature of the preceding fifty years has been found so inadequate to the demands of the latter half century, that it has become entirely obsolete; and a new nomenclature may be required by another age. This is remarkably exemplified in the department of chemical science: nor has less been accomplished in moral and political philosophy. The genius of legislation has been greatly elucidated within the present age. The principle of religious toleration and liberty of conscience, which required for its demonstration the reasoning powers of the immortal Locke, is now universally acknowledged. In a word, philosophy has been completely *popularised*, and mingles with every order of society from the palace to the cottage: all approach its illumination, all participate in its benefits.

It is true that we cannot boast, in these latter times, of oratory or poetry equal to that of Demosthenes or of Milton. These arts, being derived from nature, the natural emanations of enthusiasm and fancy, are early brought to perfection; and are probably cultivated with less advantage in a more refined state of society. The case is different with respect to the pursuits of science and philosophy: these are permanently and interminably progressive: the induction of facts, the investigation of phenomena and principles, are susceptible of perpetual advancement: and, if it were preposterous to suppose that those great masters of poetry and eloquence will ever be superseded, or perhaps even equalled, it were not less preposterous to deny that the present amount of knowledge,—immense as it now appears,—may yet, to a future generation, appear comparatively inconsiderable. Invention has exhausted its powers: the stores of philosophy are inexhaustible. In every successive age, it must be allowed, the increase of science, though continual, becomes less and less observable: it is during the infancy of knowledge that its growth is most apparent;

afterwards, the vast general extent renders us less sensible of every new accession; just as in a large assemblage of buildings, like that which composes your own city, we are scarcely aware of its constant enlargement; while, in a village, every particular addition becomes an object of attention. Thus less surprise is excited in the present age, than would have been felt in any preceding period, by every fresh augmentation of our intellectual stores. It is an age of universal curiosity, in which ignorance is felt as a calamity. The extensive circulation of books, and the multitude of cultivated minds, distinguish this period beyond comparison with any that has preceded it. Never before was that prophetic feature of the latter days so strikingly exhibited—"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

2. A second feature by which the present age is distinguished, is an increased attention to the instruction of the lower classes.

The time has been, when the education of youth in the inferior walks of society was entirely neglected: it is only during a later period that the first impulse was given to that vast machine of universal instruction, which continues to operate with increasing energy. It is painful to reflect on the unnatural separation, in whatever relates to the *mind*, which formerly subsisted between the common people and those who fill the higher ranks of the community; the monstrous chasm which divided the gross barbarism of the former from the superfluous refinement of the latter. It seemed as if an entire oblivion had taken place, in reference to their original, fraternal relation, as members of one family, children of a common father. There is little, it is true, in poverty, to gratify the taste or the imagination; but it is time, surely, to lose sight of those merely adventitious accompaniments which glitter on the eye of fancy and refinement,—time to recognize, in the humblest portions of society, partakers of our nature, with all its high prerogatives and awful destinies: it is time to remember that our distinctions are exterior and evanescent, our resemblance real and permanent; that all is transient, but what is moral and spiritual; that the only graces we can carry with us into another world, are graces of divine implantation; and that, amidst the rude incrustations of poverty and ignorance, there lurks an imperishable jewel,—a principle transcending in its value the whole material creation, — a soul, susceptible of the highest spiritual beauty, destined, perhaps, to adorn the celestial abodes, and to shine for ever in the mediatorial diadem of the Son of God! *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.*

Among the instances of an increased attention to the welfare of the lower classes, may be numbered those improvements in the penal code of our laws, which have been proposed by a living lawyer,* who appears to me at least to have understood the true nature of legal justice much better than it has been comprehended heretofore. When so much light is thrown upon a subject,—before very imperfectly investigated,—the most important amendments may be anticipated in the laws, especially those which affect the criminal's life; and we may hope the time is not distant when, in conformity with the Divine Standard, the crime of murder shall be regarded as the only proper subject of capital punishment.

In short, we appear at length to have become sensible that every thing merits our earnest attention and encouragement, which tends to promote the intellectual, moral, and civil improvement of that vast portion of the population, in which the majority of numbers and physical strength resides, and which virtually includes the destiny of the nation; that broad basis of the pyramid of society, which, while it continues sound, affords stability to the whole, but by a rent in which the entire fabric must be endangered. Nothing in nature can be conceived more frightful, nothing more fatal to the existence of an empire, than an unprincipled, profligate, irreligious, turbulent populace; quiet perhaps at the present moment, but ready on the first occasion to break out into fury and violence. It is a volcano, covered with a

* Sir James Mackintosh.

surface of verdure, but prepared to scatter desolation around on the first eruption that may disturb its fearful quiescence: it is an edifice raised upon a mine, and constantly exposed to the peril of an explosion from the precarious ground and terrible materials beneath! We have witnessed, in a neighbouring kingdom, an example of the horrors to which a nation may be subjected by the unrestrained depravity of an unrestricted and irreligious populace—horrors, which Heaven avert from ourselves! which exceed the conception of the most gigantic imagination! For nothing, in the most savage part of the brute creation, can parallel those fiery excesses of popular passion, which desolate whatever is social, whatever is sacred, in the institutions of mankind! But, on "the evils of popular ignorance," it is the less necessary to enlarge here, as the subject has been recently illustrated by a living writer,* whose genius pours new light over every topic that engages his notice.

3. A third, and a most favourable characteristic of the present times, is the improved state of preaching, and the more abundant supply of the public means of grace. The preaching of the gospel has been appointed and acknowledged by God as the grand instrument of converting sinners, and saving souls: the doctrine of Christ crucified (however it may be regarded by the disputers of this world) has been proved, in every age, to be "the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes;" to be the weakness of God, which is stronger than men; the foolishness of God which is wiser than men. During the latter part of the last century, and down to the present time, there has been a manifest increase and improvement of christian instruction. Evangelical truth has been administered in a purity and abundance to which preceding ages bear no proportion. And here, in justice to the established clergy of the realm, I cannot but remark the great advance in piety and diligence which they have exhibited during the last half century. They have gone forth in numbers, rekindling the lamp of heavenly truth where before it had burned with a dim and sickly ray; they have explored and cultivated many a neglected spot, into which other labourers could not (for obvious reasons) gain admission with equal facilities of influence; and far be it from any of their dissenting brethren to regard their success with any other than a godly jealousy, a holy emulation!

* Rev. John Foster.

Turning from our own country to heathen lands, we behold yet more striking indications of an improving age. The present is the very era of missions: all the various denominations of christians, as with one great simultaneous impulse, have started up from their long slumber of missionary inaction, awakened on a sudden to the magnitude and obligation of this neglected enterprise. There seems to be an universal feeling among christians that the time is come for fulfilling our Saviour's last command, *going forth into all the world, and teaching all the nations;* and that, if we should any longer hold our peace, *the very stones in our streets would cry out against us!* The Spirit of Christ no longer contains itself within its accustomed bounds: it breaks forth from its undue confinement, and spreads its influence in every direction. No part of the earth so remote, so forsaken, that has not begun to be invaded, that is not at least proposed to be attempted, by some of those devoted champions who have gone forth in the peaceful warfare of the gospel. Nor are the symptoms of preparation less favourable among the *heathen* themselves: a general spirit of readiness appears to be presented in the islands of the Pacific, in the districts of the Cape, of India, and America. Every thing seems to announce that though the labourers are as yet but few, the fields are already white for the approaching harvest.

4. The advancement of the Bible as the great and only standard of christian faith and practice, is a fourth remarkable feature of our times. The Scriptures have always been professedly received as the highest authority among christians; but never was that authority so publicly and completely recognized as in the present age. The church of Rome early impaired, and at length

almost entirely abolished, the authority of the sacred volume, by her multiplied additions to its contents, as well as by her extreme ignorance of its genuine instructions. Her priests were exalted from humble ministers of the word into arbitrary *legislators:* for he that has the power of annexing to the law whatever interpretation he may please, is not an administrator of the law, but a *tyrant.* As an instance of the disuse and oblivion into which the Scriptures had fallen among the Romish clergy, it is related of the celebrated missionary, Xavier, that, having met with a copy of part of the New Testament before his going out to India, he resolved to take it with him, as he thought it might be of use in his missionary labours. What a change in the state of the christian world, with regard to the estimation in which the Scriptures are held, has taken place since the days of Xavier! That eminent person—who possessed, one would hope, amidst all his errors, some real piety—thought he might as well take part of the New Testament with him when he went as a missionary to India; he conceived it might possibly be of some use! The Bible is now carried abroad in the front of the ministry; and the missionary preachers aim, as much as possible, to lose themselves in the effulgence of heavenly light. It is a remarkable fact, that the most devoted, the most successful advocate, beyond comparison with any other, which the Bible Society has yet found, is himself a priest of the Romish church;* a man who presents the extraordinary phenomenon of a popish clergyman protesting, in the very bosom of his church, against her iniquities; and declaring his determination to persevere, in spite of the devil and the prophetic beast, in diffusing those Scriptures, of which he has already circulated several hundred thousand copies.

Such exertions, it is reasonable to believe, will, at no very remote period, prove instrumental to the purifying of Christendom from papal corruptions. In the event of a persecution among the Romish clergy being occa-

* Leander Van Ess.

sioned by such exertion, a secession similar to that of the protestant reformers, might probably once more take place within their own body. God grant that such may be the issue! Would to God that the apocalyptic warning might be heard and obeyed by multitudes of that corrupted hierarchy, which owes the perpetuation of its influence to the suppression of the Scriptures,—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues!" Never before was there such an universal consent among christians as to the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible in all religious questions; never before was the maxim of Chillingworth so practically acknowledged, that "The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants." In all disputed points, it is now agreed that we should appeal solely to "the law and the testimony;" and, where these are silent, that we should imitate their silence.

5. As a fifth "sign of the times," may be mentioned that increasing harmony which prevails among the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. At last the central principle of union begins to be extensively felt and acknowledged: amidst all the diversities of external discipline or subordinate opinion, the seed of God, the principle of spiritual and immortal life implanted in the soul, is recognized by the sincere followers of the Lamb as the transcendant point of mutual attraction in the midst of minor differences. Even protestants and catholics, influenced by a kindred piety, can now cordially embrace each other; as in the case of that zealous professor of the Romish church to whom I before referred, who corresponds in terms of cordial affection with the protestant secretary of the Bible Society for its foreign department. The essential spirit of religion begins to assert its ascendancy over all besides. The most enlightened, the *selectest* christians in every denomination, are ready to cultivate an intercourse with kindred spirits, with all who hold the same essential principles, in any other. Formerly, such an intercourse was rarely indulged, and accompanied with reserves and apprehensions good men looked more at their distinctions than their resem-

blances, at points of repulsion than those of attraction. Now the case is altered; and it may be truly said that, in this respect, *the former things are passed away*. Now, the saying of our common master has received a fulfilment almost unknown before: "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, even by the love ye bear to each other.*"

The reason why christians have been so tardy in arriving at a disposition so much to be desired, is principally to be found in those exaggerated notions of the importance of church government under some particular form, which so long swayed the minds of excellent men; the difference of outward garb concealed the unity of the spirit which inwardly animated their hearts alike. In the *seminal* principles of their religion, in their equal dependence on an incarnate Redeemer and a sanctifying Spirit, they have now discovered a centre of attraction,—a common chord to which all their hearts vibrate in unison: and thus, without the smallest sacrifice of their respective sentiments or practices, they can indulge the most entire affection, and exert the most zealous co-operation. Can it be supposed that such an improvement will not silence the old sarcasm of infidels, derived from the prevailing dissensions of those who professed themselves the disciples of one Master? Can it be questioned whether the christian army, thus closely embodied, will prosecute with redoubled vigour their warfare against the powers of darkness? If the kingdom of Satan, when not divided against itself, is able to stand, can we doubt that the family of Jesus Christ, no longer disunited, will prosper in its consentaneous exertions? Besides which, the unanimity of christians is at once an indication and a presage of the Holy Spirit's more copious effusion on the church; at once an effect and an earnest of the love of Christ to his followers; while it affords a delightful emblem and foretaste of that perfect state in which all are for ever united in harmony and affection.

6. In the last place I cannot but number, among the prognostics of the destined triumph of christianity, that

extension of civil and religious liberty by which the present times are distinguished. In this view, I cannot but cordially rejoice in the political revolutions which have recently taken place in Spain, Portugal, and Naples. Nothing could be imagined more unfavourable to the cause of religion than the prior condition of those kingdoms, in which a despotic tyranny prevailed alike in the church and the state. Such revolutionary commotions among the nations must be still expected, until the arrival of that happy period when liberty, civil and religious, shall be universally established.

The enjoyment of civil liberty is essential to the developement and exertion of the best and noblest energies of the human mind. Deprived of this, nothing truly great can flourish in the moral world. There exists, indeed, an indissoluble connexion between the civil and the religious freedom of a nation; and whatever may be thought of other considerations, every friend to the prosperity of religion must rejoice in the advancement of that liberal and enlightened policy under which alone it is favoured and fostered. It is only under a free representative government that this can be the case. Never did religious liberty flourish in the chilling, deadly atmosphere of despotism: it can open and spread only in the sunshine of political freedom. As the greater includes the less, the civil implies also the religious liberty of a state. Religion grows and blooms among the highest and most palmy branches of the tree of liberty, and ripens in luxuriance amongst its topmost boughs. This is the natural, established, order of things, in the present world: and, let it be remembered, we are not entitled to expect any *miracles*, properly so called, to facilitate the coming of our Saviour's kingdom. In the whole course of missionary enterprise there has not been a single check upon the accustomed laws of providence, not one interruption of the connexion which subsists between primary and secondary causes, not one deviation from the ancient course of nature. It is by a favourable arrangement of political circumstances that religion is most likely to be advanced; by the establishment of that genuine and

legitimate freedom, which is equally removed from the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and tyranny on the other. It is this that seems to be the precise temperature, the genial climate, of religion: and doubtless God will prepare his own way in this as in every other respect: *every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked rendered straight, the rough places plain; and all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

In glancing at the different institutions which have arisen in these latter times for the moral and spiritual benefit of mankind, it is pleasing and striking to observe how exactly they have fitted in, and, as it were, dovetailed with each other. First appeared the missionaries, as pioneers to break up the ground and open the way; then the Bible Society followed; and, at last, the system of education completed the design. Each arose, in its order, to sustain and aid the others. Had any one of these existed alone, it would have proved inefficient for want of the rest. As it is, the finger of Providence is discernible in the very succession in which these institutions made their appearance; while, in their union and co-operation, they constitute an apparatus completely adapted to promote the christian renovation of the world: regarded in the order of *means*, the teachers, the lesson, and the power of reading it, appear well adapted to *make the man of God perfect in every good word and work.* We speak, you will observe, of external, instrumental preparations: there is still needed, as you are aware, another and a higher *preparation of the heart in man;* a spirit within us, which must be imparted from above. The machinery is provided, but the Spirit alone can move the wheels.

With respect to the institution for which I have the honour to be an humble advocate on this occasion, if there be any force in the preceding remarks, few words are necessary to recommend it to your patronage. As you would live in a land of Bibles and readers of the Bible,—in a nation dignified as a seminary of religious instruction; as you would desire, when called to quit

the present stage of being, to leave your children in a nation of christians; it becomes you, more especially in a season of public alarm, to support an institution which justly assumes the name of *national.* If the man who rescues from barrenness a neglected portion of the country, and spreads over its face fertility and beauty, deserves and obtains our praise, shall *that society* solicit our support in vain, which rescues from all the evils of ignorance multitudes of those in the humbler walks of life, who might otherwise *perish for lack of knowledge;* while it opens their understandings, at least in a degree, to understand the Scriptures of eternal truth and life? It is impossible to doubt that such an institution is one of the great means which the Divine Being employs for the accomplishment of his own great end. He does not christianize the world by magic; we are not to expect religion to descend from heaven, or to rise upon the earth like a beautiful vision! It will indeed descend from heaven, and arise upon the earth: but this will be by regular, appointed, adapted means; by means such as those which are now set at work, and require our continued assistance: means which afford an omen of the desired success; since we cannot conceive why all this energy should have been impressed on the minds of men, if not for the providential accomplishment of one grand result—the transformation of the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

XII.

THE LOVE OF LIFE.*

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONS, NOVEMBER, 1820.]

JOB ii. 4.—*And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*

THOUGH these words were uttered by the father of lies, they are no lie. The truth of a communication does not always depend on the character of those who convey it.

The expression might perhaps be more properly rendered, "skin *upon* skin," or "skin *after* skin:" skins, of which the uses are not easily enumerated, being the principal article of property and exchange in a primitive and pastoral state of society.

I propose briefly to consider the principle of attachment to life, so emphatically asserted in these words; some of the reasons for which it is implanted; and some improvements which may be derived from the subject.

I. The love of life is the simplest and strongest principle of nature. It operates *universally*, on every part of the brute creation, as well as on every individual of the human race; *perpetually*, under all circumstances, the most distressing as well as the most pleasing; and with a *power* peculiar to itself,—while it arms the feeble with energy, the fearful with courage, whenever an occasion occurs for defending life, whenever the last sanctuary of nature is invaded, and its dearest treasure endangered. This mysterious principle does not act with a variable force, dependent on the caprices of will or the dictates of reason: it operates with a steady, constant influence, as a law of nature, insensible, and yet powerful. It corresponds, in the animated world, with the great principle of gravitation in the material system, or with the centripetal force, by which the planets are retained in their proper orbits, and resist

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

their opposite tendency to fly off from the centre. The most wretched, not less than the most prosperous,—those who seem to possess nothing that can render life desirable, not less than those who are surrounded by all its pleasures,—are bound to life as by a principle of central attraction, which extends its influence to the last moments of expiring nature. We see men still clinging to life, when they have lost all for which they appeared to live. A striking instance of this has been recently exhibited by that extraordinary individual,* who, rather than lose his life in the scenes of his renown, has exchanged the pinnacle of power and fame for the deepest degradation and obscurity. There are few qualities that command greater admiration than the superiority to the love of life and the dread of dissolution: as we admire things in proportion to their difficulty and rarity, we are astonished by that heroic bravery which can triumph over the first law of our nature. The Scriptures frequently recognize and appeal to this fundamental principle: thus, in apparent allusion to the text, our Saviour demands, "What shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*," or, as the word literally denotes, his *life?* The only promise annexed to any of the ten commandments, exhibits life as the chief earthly good, and its prolongation as the reward of filial piety: while, in the Proverbs, Wisdom is represented as having "length of days in her right hand; in her left, riches and honour."

II. I proceed to assign the reasons, or some of the reasons, for which this instinctive attachment to life is so deeply implanted in our nature.

1. The first and most obvious reason respects the preservation of life itself. That which, of all our possessions, is the most easily lost or injured, is that on the continuance of which all other things depend. The preservation of life requires incessant attention and exertion; the material requisite to feed the vital flame must be collected from innumerable sources, at great expense

* Buonaparte.

of time and trouble: the spark of life is perpetually exposed to the danger of extinction, like a lamp carried in a stormy night, that requires to be covered by the hand, and seems every moment ready to expire. Nothing but the strongest attachment to life could secure it, amidst continual exposures, from sudden or premature destruction: without the operation of the self-preserving instinct, man would be literally like a shadow, that is here to-day and gone to-morrow. On the first departure of prosperity, on the first preponderance of sorrow over joy, in this chequered scene,—in which the colours of good and evil are so constantly intermingled that it is often difficult to say which predominates over the other,—how many, unrestrained by the natural love of life, would forsake their stations; how few, unsupported by attachment to being, would persevere in their course to the end, or "run with patience the race set before them!" Our first father would probably have fulfilled, in the letter, the sentence he incurred, and died on the very day of his transgression, thus destroying the human race in their original, had it not been for the benevolent care of his Creator, by which his existence, and the desire of its continuance, were secured for the great purpose of his moral probation. For life, we cannot forget, is, in its highest use, the season of our trial for an eternal state of being. This is the point of view in which its preservation becomes unspeakably interesting. It stands connected with nothing less than the incarnation, suffering, and glory, of the Son of God; and, whatever is the importance of those stupendous mysteries, the same is the importance of human life, considered as the "time of our visitation!" The results of the whole process of redemption, the accomplishment of the greatest designs of the Deity, are involved in the continuance of this probationary state of existence.

2. A second purpose answered by the principle we are considering, is the promotion of industry and labour. Life must be loved, in order that it may be preserved; and preserved, in order that it may be employed. The original denunciation of death was preceded by the sentence of a life of labour: "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground.*" In every other state of society, and perhaps in none so much as in the most refined state, the greater part of the community must necessarily be subjected to labour. Under the best possible form of government, some must produce what is to be enjoyed by others. This unavoidable condition of subjection and servitude will be attended, in many cases, by great hardship and suffering. In such circumstances, nothing but that strong attachment to life, of which we are speaking, could reconcile the weary sufferers to a voluntary continuance in a state that entails so much endurance. Yet, while every humane person must regard such instances of excessive toil with compassion, and desire to alleviate them so far as he may be able; this laborious condition of the multitude should be considered as a dispensation of mercy blended with judgement. For what would be the state of society, disturbed as even now it is by crimes, if the multitudes of those, who are at present confined by labour, were let loose upon the public in all the wantonness of a licentious imagination and unbridled passions? Reflect for a moment, what misery and desolation must arise from such a mass of depravity, such an accumulation of cupidity and malevolence, abandoned, without any fixed employment, to its own turbulent impulses! This, it must be acknowledged, is a melancholy picture of human nature; but it is such as truth requires. How great a benefit, therefore, that necessary condition of labour, which acts as a barrier of defence against the wildness of human passions, and says, as it were, to that tempestuous ocean, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther!" But the desire of preserving life is the strongest incentive to all this salutary industry and toil.

3. A third object to which the same principle is subservient, is the protection of life from the hand of violence. Without some strong restraining sentiment, the life of individuals would be exposed to continual danger

from the disordered passions of others. The first crime, of a social nature, committed by man, was the extinction of his brother's life; and the first penal law, enacted by God, was directed against a repetition of that crime: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The love of life, so strongly felt in every bosom, inspires it with a proportionate horror of any act that would invade the life of another. Every one burns with indignation against an assassin, as against his own personal enemy; every one feels interested in the discovery of such a criminal, and would consider himself *honoured* in stepping forward to drag before the tribunal of justice one who is regarded as if he had injured every partaker of his nature! This universal horror, and exposure to the public vengeance, which peculiarly attaches to the crime of murder in all civilized states of society, cannot but operate as a powerful and important safeguard of human life. The magistrate and the law owe their whole protective efficacy to that sentiment of attachment to existence, which is a *law written on every heart.*

III. In adding a brief improvement of this subject, we may infer,

1. The fall of man; the universal apostacy of our nature from the state in which it originally proceeded from the Divine Author. Created with this inextinguishable desire of existence, we are destined to dissolution: our nature includes two contradictory principles; the certainty of death, and the attachment to life. This fact affords the clearest evidence that we are now placed in an unnatural, disordered, disjointed condition; that a great and awful change has passed upon our race since our first father came from the hand of God. And this change must be owing to *ourselves;* it cannot be ascribed to our *Creator*, without the supposition of a sufficient cause in our own misconduct. Here revelation breaks the silence of nature, while it tells us that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all, because all have sinned.* On any other hypothesis, the problem is inexplicable; for, can the

Father of the universe, himself the source of all created tenderness, be conceived to have thus treated his own offspring without a real and sufficient *cause?* Can malevolence and misery issue from the bosom of infinite goodness and love? Can He who gave us life, who bound us to it by so strong a tie of attachment, deprive us of it, and doom us to a corruption from which nature recoils, without a necessity arising from ourselves? Let any one that is a parent judge by his own parental feelings,—according to the appeal of our Saviour himself, founded upon this analogy. But the Scripture makes all clear: we are like the potter's vessel described by Jeremiah, which was at first made good, but was marred after it was made: "*How is the gold become dim! and the fine gold changed! The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us, for we have sinned!*"

2. But the subject may serve to remind us, also, of the salvation which provided us the antidote, to our ruined condition. Every human being, it is true, is treated as a criminal, who, though he may be reprieved for a time, must expect to suffer the penalty of the law he has violated;—every individual, in his turn, is led forth to his destiny of death. This, however, is consistent with the plan of salvation. It is a *restorative* dispensation under which we are placed: we are not treated as innocent,—as if we had never offended,—but as criminals chastised for disobedience, while they are placed on trial for mercy. The deluge presented a grand monument of the divine wrath on sin; and a smaller exhibition of that wrath is repeated in the death of every human being. In such a situation, what we want is *life;* and this is abundantly offered. *Eternal life is the gift of God by Jesus Christ!* "*I*," said Jesus Christ, "*I am the life! I am the bread of life! Whosoever believeth in me shall live for ever!*" "*The life*," says John, "*was manifested: whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!*" Such are some of the last accents of inspiration. As the value of a medicine is proportioned to the malignity of a disease,—how earnest should be our desire, how grateful our acceptance, of such a remedy! To pass from death

to life; to triumph in the prospect and approach of the last enemy; to enjoy even here many a delightful foretaste of the heavenly immortality; to experience a vital union with the Father of spirits, and hereafter to attain the consummation of this union, and bask for ever in the brightness of His presence;—*behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us! How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* Such neglect involves a degree of guilt and infatuation which it will require eternity to deplore, and eternity to comprehend!

3. As a third improvement, connected with what has been observed, let me remind you of the *medium* by which this divine life is imparted and received. There must be a medium of contact between the benefit and the subject of that benefit; between the eternal life provided, and the Spirit for which it is provided. This connecting medium is faith. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ.* Faith is the link of union between the salvation as prepared and perfect *without* ourselves, and our own personal being. This is beautifully, though briefly, expressed by Peter, when he assures the cripple whom he had healed, that the cure had been effected through the medium of *faith*: "*His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man whole.*" *Faith* was as necessary in the subject of the cure, as the *name* itself on which his faith relied. The work of the Spirt of Christ on the heart, is as necessary to our salvation as the work of Christ himself,—his obedience unto death, and his intercession in heaven.

4. In the last place, the subject concurs with the occasion to remind us of the duty, the obligation under which we lie, to impart the knowledge and enjoyment of these vital, eternal blessings, to our suffering fellow-sinners. The civil, and merely temporal benefits of christianity, are great: the water of life, in its passage through a country, diffuses innumerable improvements wherever it pursues its peaceful course;—the very *leaves of the tree of life* are given *for the healing of the nations.* But far be it from us to recommend the civil as the *great* and *ultimate* blessings of the gospel; these are of a *spiritual* and *eternal* nature; furnishing a perfect antidote to the dread of death—a perfect satisfaction for the desire of life, so deeply implanted in the human breast.

XIII.

NOTES OF THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

TRANSCRIBED FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF MR. HALL.

"*Behold the Lamb of God.*"

I. The import of this appellation.

1. The peculiar features of His personal character.
2. The design of His death.

1. His personal character. His innocence. His patience. "Such a High-Priest became us, &c."
2. He was the Paschal Lamb. Exod. xii.

Draw the parallel in several particulars. Both sacrifices the instrument of effecting a great deliverance. The benefit of both, moral, not physical. The lamb must be perfect, offered by and for all the people. Blood sprinkled. Not a bone broken. Time of offering.

II. The purport of the exclamation,—that He is an object of attention. Its most proper object. Three qualities entitled to attention.

1. Intrinsic greatness. An incarnate Deity, the Ruler of all things, the mysterious Mediator and Advocate.
2. Newness. What so new as the invisible Creator clothed in human flesh—The Ancient of Days cradled as an infant;—He who upholdeth all things sinking under a weight of suffering;—The Lord of glory expiring on the cross;—the Light of the world sustaining an awful eclipse;—the Sun of Righteousness immerged in the shadow of death?

3. The relation an object bears to our interest. The Lamb of God a most interesting object to all classes of men: (1.) To sinners: (2.) To saints.*

MR. GRINFIELD'S ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON,

AS REPRESENTED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

I. Import of the appellation, "Lamb of God."

1. Features of the personal character of Christ: (1.) Innocence; (2.) Patience.

2. Design of his appearance.

Points of resemblance between His sacrifice and the Passover. In each, (1.) A great deliverance achieved; (2.) A destruction, otherwise inevitable, averted; (3.) The benefit moral, not physical; (4.) The personal qualities of the victims similar; (5.) The blood required to be sprinkled; (6.) The sacrifice to be regarded by the whole congregation; (7.) The time of the offering the same; (8.) No bone to be broken; (9.) The passover prepared by fire, as an emblem of torture.

II. Design of the exclamation, "Behold!"

An object worthy of supreme attention from all;

1. From sinners. Three qualities which command attention, exhibited here in the highest degrees: (1.) *Greatness;* (2.) *Novelty;* (3.) *Usefulness.*

2. From believers.

3. From the redeemed in glory.

4. From the holy angels.

5. From the Divine Being.

* These notes give the plan of the sermon as it was preached at Bedford: at Bristol the application of the text was extended, as the following sketch represents, to *all* orders of beings.

THE LAMB OF GOD—HIS CHARACTER—HIS SACRIFICE—AND HIS CLAIM TO UNIVERSAL ATTENTION.

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, NOVEMBER, 1820, AND AGAIN AT BEDFORD, MARCH, 1821.]

JOHN i. 35, 36.—*Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!**

THE forerunner of our Lord manifested a peculiar anxiety to impress the minds of his hearers with a conviction that he was not himself the *Messiah.* Yet there appears to have existed a party among his disciples, who entertained an improper attachment to his ministry, preferring it to that of our Lord. Their disciples constituted two distinct classes; the partisans of John, disposed to exalt his pretensions greatly beyond their real nature and his own assertions, seem to have countenanced the opinion that he was the great expected personage. To counteract such a fatal misconception, the Baptist embraced every opportunity of referring his followers to Jesus Christ, as well as of explaining his own character. He was, as he represented, "the voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord;" he was "the friend of the Bridegroom," not the Bridegroom himself; and, with the same view, he uttered, on two occasions, the declaration contained in the passage just read. The testimony there expressed is not the first which he had borne to Christ: it appears that on the preceding day he had announced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world:" and, as the evangelist relates, in the text, "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, *Behold the Lamb of God!*"

While we admire the disinterestedness of this great man in endeavouring to convince his converts that Jesus Christ was infinitely his superior, we cannot help sup-

* The present transcript is the result of the notes taken by the Rev T. Grinfield, at Bristol, col ated with the notes taken at Bedford.

posing that, probably, his ministry and his life were the sooner closed, in consequence of the inordinate attachment of his adherents. It was unfit that he should remain as a rival to the Saviour: he was therefore withdrawn from the scene, and his ministry prematurely closed, that every degree of confidence for salvation might be removed from the creature, to be fixed on the *Saviour* alone.

In considering the testimony borne to Jesus Christ in the text, I shall direct your attention, first, to the *import of the appellation;* and then to the *purport of the exclamation*, as it may be understood to express the *claim which Jesus Christ possesses to the attention of every order of beings.*

I. The *import of the appellation*, "the Lamb of God." There are *two* things which, in all probability, John had in his view when he used this appellation: the distinguishing features of our Saviour's *personal character*, and the great *design of his appearance and death.*

1. In the first place, the expression, "Lamb of God," has respect to the *peculiar features*, the *personal character of Christ.*

In the Scriptures, as perhaps in every known language of mankind, a *lamb* has been selected as the popular symbol of *innocence* and *patience.* These were qualities that peculiarly distinguished our Saviour, and formed, on every occasion, the most conspicuous features of his character.

(1.) He was a perfect pattern of *innocence.* As one of his apostles describes him, "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." His freedom from every taint of original sin was secured by his miraculous conception: hence the angel at his nativity declared to the Virgin Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and, therefore, that *holy* thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the *Son of God.*" As he advanced in age, all his actions were completely consonant with the law of God. He could say to his bitterest enemies, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He could affirm that, when Satan came, he had nothing in Christ.

Even the opponents of christianity have never attempted to impugn the moral character of its Author. It was *necessary* that "the Lamb of God" should be "without spot or blemish." "Such a High-priest *became* us;" because, as an *example*, he could not have been explicitly proposed to our imitation, had the slightest imperfection attached to himself; and, as a *sacrifice* for sin, he could not have been acceptable in the eye of infinite purity and justice, had he been any other than a spotless victim. Accordingly his conduct was, in every particular, blameless and virtuous. In the most trying situations, under every form of temptation, we find him never-failing: there appears nothing in his character in the *smallest* degree inconsistent with the idea of absolute human perfection. The greatest absence of every thing like malevolence,—of every thing merely selfish,—appears in all his actions. His miracles were always miracles of *mercy and beneficence;* his omnipotence was exerted only to do good: it seemed as if the secret of his power resided only in benefiting others, and relieving the miseries of those who surrounded him; as if he existed only for them, and became the most helpless of beings when his own interest was concerned. Innocence is a negative term, it properly denotes only the absence of faults and offences; in this respect it formed but a *part* of his character. *His* innocence was crowned with infinite *beneficence.*

(2.) A second, and an equally distinguished feature of his character, implied in the appellation of a *lamb*,—is his *patience.* "The Son of man," as he said of himself "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to *give his life a ransom* for many." He bowed to the will of his Father, and was "*obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross." In the midst of injuries and insults, the most unmerited and aggravated that were ever suffered, he exhibited a perfect pattern of patient resignation. He never resented the violence of his enemies: "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

There was indeed *one* instance in which "he opened his mouth;"—arraigned before the high-priest, he answered not a word; until, in reply to the demand whether he was the Son of God, he answered in the affirmative; thus breaking silence before his enemies *only* when his confession insured his condemnation to death. The miraculous powers he possessed over nature and the minds of men, he never exerted to avert his own sufferings, or avenge his wrongs upon his persecutors. Though the elements were at his disposal, and demons subject to his commands, yet, in the crisis of his affliction, nothing was visible but compassion for the guilty: "Father," he cried, "forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Nor would he suffer his disciples to retaliate the injuries he received: he rebuked Peter when he drew the sword on Malchus; he rebuked his disciples when they would have called down fire on the Samaritans, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Gentleness and tenderness, a sensibility to the sufferings of others, and an indifference to his own,—these formed the most prominent traits of his character; in *these* he places the *essence* of his religion, so far as it is practical and relative to others. Of other virtues, we may say that they form parts of the christian character; but these are emphatically the christian spirit itself; in proportion as we are patient, compassionate, forbearing, forgiving, and ready even to *suffer* for the good of others, we *have* "the mind of Christ."

It was thus that he illustrated, in his own example, the nature and genius of the gospel dispensation, as superior to every other. None of his predecessors in the church of God could compare with himself here. The *law* was a *severe* dispensation; its tendency was not so much to cherish the milder virtues, the lamb-like graces of the gospel. Moses, though "the meekest of men" under that economy, was overtaken by the impetuosity of his spirit when he dashed in pieces the tables inscribed by the finger of God. The miracles of Elijah and Elisha were sometimes destructive: the former commanded fire from heaven, the latter bears from the wood, to consume his enemies. John the Baptist was austere in his manners, and terrific in his preaching: there was in him much *moral grandeur*, but it was of a savage and uncultivated aspect; it resembled the lonely and severe character of the wilderness in which he appeared: he was "the axe laid to the root of the trees;" the son of thunder, commissioned to summon the guilty before the tribunal, and denounce judgement on every unfruitful professor. But Jesus Christ was mild, affable, social, compassionate; "the friend of publicans and sinners;" who came to "feed his flock like a shepherd, to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom." When he beheld the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it; when he said to all who heard him "Learn of me," he could truly and peculiarly add, as at once an example and encouragement to his disciples, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." So well might he be styled, with a view to the features of his character, "the Lamb of God."

2. But we shall form a very inadequate idea of the full import of John's expression, if we confine it to the *example* of Jesus Christ. This is not the only, nor perhaps the principal view, in which we are to understand the appellation, "Lamb of God!" There is another object of the highest importance to us, and to which his innocence and patience were requisite. He appeared not merely as a pattern of holiness; though, in this respect, we have seen in him an unrivalled preeminence above all the messengers of God; but he is to be principally regarded as the *Saviour*, "who taketh," or *beareth*, "away the sin of the world." That the Baptist, in calling Jesus Christ "the Lamb of God," had a reference to his *sacrificial* character, is manifest from the explanatory clause he added on the preceding occasion—"who taketh away the sin of the world." The *example* of Christ, however perfect, had no proper power to "take away sin:" the best example, as we know, has but a feeble influence in correcting depravity, and none whatever in removing guilt. It is unnecessary, however, to multiply words in proof of this doctrine; because it is our privilege, on the

present occasion, to address those who are continually reminded of Christ as the only mediator between God and man. In the appellation employed by the Baptist there is then, secondly, a distinct reference to the *great design of his appearance and death.* It points him out as the Lamb which God provided and accepted. It marks the *sacrificial* character of Christ, prefigured by the legal offerings. This Divine Lamb fulfilled all that was signified by those ancient sacrifices, which consisted principally of lambs; and especially all that was represented by the paschal lamb. A lamb was offered daily, in the morning and evening, in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple: but the paschal sacrifice was solemnized with a peculiar attention and publicity once in every year. The Jews regarded this as the most important of all their observances. It was the most ancient of them all, instituted on their departure from Egypt, in commemoration of their deliverance from the destroying angel: and though at first it reminded them of that event, yet, afterwards, it probably served to direct their expectations to the great sacrifice for sin by the promised Redeemer. The circumstances and the purport of this remarkable ceremony may be found fully described in the twelfth chapter of Exodus; a chapter replete with the doctrine of Christ crucified. On that memorable night, in which the angel of the Lord slew all the first-born of Egypt, not excepting those of the royal household, he was ordered to spare the families of Israel, which had been directed to exhibit a sign of the redemption by Jesus Christ, by sprinkling the blood of a lamb on the posts of their doors. The destroying angel recognized this consecrated token, and *passed over* the house thus marked, without smiting any member of the family it contained. That this was typical of the salvation by Jesus Christ, is evident from the application of it made by the apostle Paul, when he says, "Christ, *our* passover, is sacrificed for us; *therefore* let us keep the feast." The idea of Christ being the great end of that ceremony is so plain, so certain, that the apostle takes no pains, as he does on many other

occasions, to establish the point by reasoning; he simply assumes and asserts it as a well-known truth.

Many particulars may be pointed out in the resemblance between the paschal sacrifice and "the Lamb of God:" I proceed to trace the parallel through some of the most remarkable.

(1.) The passover was designed to *commemorate* a great deliverance, that of Israel from the captivity and slavery of Egypt; and it was designed to *prefigure* a deliverance far greater—that of mankind from a tyranny far more abominable, a depression far more miserable; from the captivity of Satan, the slavery of sin, the dread of wrath to come; that the happy subjects of this divine redemption may be placed under the conduct of providence and grace in their passage through the wilderness of this world, until they shall be settled in the land of promise and eternal rest.

(2.) The passover commemorated a deliverance from a destruction otherwise *inevitable;* it was the only appointed means of safety; there was no other possibility of escape from the angel of divine wrath. Thus the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is the only refuge of hope set before us,—the only appointed means of escape from that wrath which will come upon all that neglect this great salvation.

(3.) In *both* these cases (it deserves attention) there exists no *natural* relation between the *means* and the *end:* the benefit of the sacrifice is *moral, not physical.* The sprinkling of the blood on the doors of the Israelites had no intrinsic efficacy whatever to preserve them: none can suppose any such efficacy therein, as that by which causes produce their effects in the course of nature. The Divine Being *appointed* the blood to be the sign and the instrument of the deliverance; and, being thus appointed, it served to arrest the progress of the destroying angel. So it is with the sacrifice of Christ. Between the death of Christ and the expiation of guilt, there was no such relation as that which subsists in nature between secondary causes and their appropriate

effects: it was a *moral* relation, resulting from the will and appointment of God, who accepted the death of Christ as a consideration of sufficient dignity to satisfy his justice and vindicate his law. It had no efficacy as a *natural* cause; on the contrary, it left all *natural* causes to operate as before: but it became a *moral* motive with God; an authentic instrument for the sanctification and acceptance of those who are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." It was a powerful cause in and upon the divine mind, moving Him who moves all things. For the sake of *this* great sacrifice it seemed fit and right, and, in every respect, worthy of Him, "*by* whom and *for* whom are all things," that every penitent believer should be treated as if he had never sinned; that, through *this*, he should be washed, justified, sanctified, and glorified. And there was no more a change of the divine mind in the latter than in the former instance; since the Deity foresaw all that should come to pass. At a distance He contemplated the sacrifice of Christ: He beheld in it the honour of the divine law, the display of the divine purity and justice. This sacrifice, being always present to his contemplation, was the ground on which sins, committed under the first covenant, were pardoned to the penitent; and it is with a reference to the efficacy of this expiation, as reflected back from the cross, that Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

(4.) Again, we may observe the similarity which appears in the *personal qualities* of the two victims. The paschal lamb must be perfect, a male of the first year, without spot or blemish. So Christ, as we have seen, possessed all *moral* perfection; exhibited every virtue, without a single fault or defect. He possessed also, the *physical* perfection of man: he was slain, not when withered by age or decayed by sickness, but "in the flower of his strength, while his breasts were full of milk, and his bones of marrow," — when youth was vanishing into mature manhood.

(5.) Observe, further, the slaying of the paschal lamb did not avail, unless its *blood* were *sprinkled*. The blood was shed in order that it might be sprinkled; the sprinkling was necessary to preserve the Israelites. Neither will the blood of Jesus Christ, my brethren, prove of saving efficacy, unless it be *applied*. When wrath shall overwhelm the unbelieving, in the judgement of the last day, it will be of no avail to plead the merit of this great sacrifice, unless we have approached it ourselves. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the *blood* of Jesus, we must draw near with a heart sprinkled from an evil (or an accusing) conscience." None will be saved from the destruction of that day, though they may have lived in the midst of christian privileges, who cannot say with the apostle—"We are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." The merit of the Redeemer's blood is infinite, but its efficacy is confined to its application. In his own words, "except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you." The apostles unite the *name* of Christ with *faith* in his name, as the means they had employed in healing the cripple at the gate of the temple: "His name, through *faith* in his name, hath made this man whole; yea, the *faith* which is by him hath given this man this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

(6.) As another particular of the parallel, it may be remarked that, while many of the legal sacrifices were offered *by individuals* in their private or public characters, the paschal lamb was required to be slain and offered *by the whole congregation of Israel;* it being understood by all, that he who neglected this important sacrifice would lose its benefit,—would be cut off from the congregation. "Behold," here, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the *world!*"—The blood of animal victims streamed for ages on the Jewish altars, but did not take away sin, even from the Jews themselves: the benefit to be derived from those offerings was chiefly derived by those who looked *beyond* them. Except as shadows of the true Sacrifice for sin, they were to be

considered merely as civil rites. The voice with which they spoke, could not, in general, be heard "within the veil." The greater part of the Jews were worshippers of the outer court, and rested in their sacrifices as means of external and civil advantages. But, in "the Lamb of God," proclaimed by John, we behold an oblation sufficient for the whole world; a fountain opened for sin, and flowing in all directions; an element of pardon and eternal life, free and extensive as the atmosphere we breathe, which encompasses every portion of the earth's surface. "*He*," says the apostle, "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for *ours* only, but also for the sins of the *whole* world:" "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

(7.) In the next place, the *time of slaying the paschal lamb* agreed with the time of our Saviour's sacrifice. The sufferings of Christ took place at the feast of the passover; and the very hour of the day appears to have corresponded with that at which the paschal lamb was slain. In the chapter of Exodus before referred to, it is required that the lamb should be killed *in the evening;* or, (as the original signifies, and as it is rendered in the margin of our version,) *between the two evenings;* that is, between the chronological evening and the natural: the one commencing immediately after the sun had passed the meridian, or after twelve at noon; the other by computation of time, being at six o'clock. Thus the middle hour *between the two evenings* will be at three in the afternoon; the point of time at which our Lord expired on the cross. He was fastened to it "at the sixth hour," which answers to our noon; and, "about the ninth hour," or three in the afternoon, "He cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." Thus, at the moment when the paschal lamb was appointed to be slain, did "the Lamb of God" expire, under the stroke of the divine justice.

(8.) Great objects consecrate all that surrounds them: they impart a portion of their own grandeur to every thing they touch, to every circumstance with which they are connected. It was required that "*not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken;*" it must be sacrificed

entire: and this was ordered, that it might the more exactly represent the great Sacrifice. When Christ was crucified, the soldiers (as you remember) finding him already dead, forbore to break his legs, as, according to the custom, they had broken the legs of his two fellow-sufferers; and thus, as the historian observes, was fulfilled that which had been written: "a bone of him shall not be broken." This circumstance, though in itself minute, serves to show that Jesus Christ, as our Sacrifice, was equally the subject of the prediction, and the substance of the type.

(9.) Finally, the pashal lamb was permitted to be prepared as food, by no other means than *fire*. What could more appropriately prefigure the agonies of "the Lamb of God,"—who sweat great drops of blood in the garden; —who was parched with thirst on the cross:—who, having submitted himself to endure the indignant justice of the Governor of the universe, experienced the awful truth, that "our God is a consuming fire:" when "His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" and when, in the climax of his anguish, he exclaimed, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He contended, in those moments, with all the storms and billows of the divine wrath; he tasted the penalties of eternal death.

It appears, then, that there was in many particulars a striking resemblance between Jesus Christ and the paschal sacrifice: and the great beauty of the passover arises from this resemblance. How strangely, therefore, are *they* mistaken, who confine their view of "the Lamb of God" to his *example*, and deny the sacrificial and atoning nature of his sufferings. We might ask such persons *why* was even inanimate nature as it were in convulsions at his death? *Why* did the heavens put on sackcloth, and the sun hide his face in darkness? Why were the rocks rent, and the earth shaken? Or (if this be considered as merely impassioned declamation,) we may demand—*Why* do we meet with such constant and emphatic expressions regarding the blood, the cross, the

sacrifice, the death of Jesus Christ? Why should there have been so vast a preparation of legal sacrifices, of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, expressly compared by the apostle (especially in his epistle to the Hebrews) with the death of Jesus Christ?—Why all this, if nothing more was meant by his death, than the completion of his *example*, the *sealing of the truths he taught* with the blood he shed. Supposing *this* to be all that was intended to be understood by such representations, we can only say that the gospel would be the greatest imposition on common sense that ever was presented to the world; it would combine the most pompous pretensions with the most meagre reality, of all existing compositions.

II. We proceed to consider, as the second part of the subject, *the spirit and design of the exclamation* uttered by the Baptist in the text, as it may be understood to express *the claim which Jesus Christ possesses to attention from beings of every order: all* are interested in complying with the summons given in those words, "Behold the Lamb of God."

It appears that the Baptist did not principally mean, by this exclamation, to direct the *eyes* of his disciples to the person of Jesus Christ as a *visible* object;—in *that* sense, none could comply with the call, except the few who were present in the scenes of his transient ministry: the Baptist desired to command the *attention* of his hearers to the *character and office* of "the Lamb of God." In this sense it is that the term "Behold!" is frequently used in the Scriptures, where no literal vision of the object is intended: it is used to denote that the object *thus* introduced, is deserving of *attention:* as when the angel says, "*Behold*, I bring you good tidings of great joy!" or, when the apostle exclaims, "*Behold* what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" In the text the meaning is similar to that of the definite pronoun, as though John had said, "*This* is the Lamb of God:" just as, on another occasion, he said, "*This* is he of whom I spake." The purport of the exclamation, therefore, is, that Jesus Christ, as "the Lamb of God," deserves universal attention; that he is the greatest object of admiring regard, which the universe presents. In illustrating the spirit of the exclamation thus understood, we observe the claim which "the Lamb of God" possesses on the attention of *all mankind.* Mankind are comprehended in two distinct classes,—they are either sinners who remain in their original character; or they are believers, who, though not ceasing from sin altogether, are yet delivered from its dominion. *Here* is an object preeminently worthy the attention of *both* these classes:—

1. And, in the first place, of *all who remain, as sinners, in their original character and state.* In every possible view in which an object can deserve regard, "the Lamb of God" claims from all such persons the most earnest attention.

There are three qualities which entitle an object to our regard.

(1.) The first is its own *intrinsic greatness.* On this account the sun, the moon, and the stars, those illustrious splendours of the firmament, have attracted the attention of mankind in every age and nation. But the wonders of the *material* world are merely subordinate to those of the *intelligent and moral universe;* and *here* an object is exhibited, incomparably greater, in the scale of being, than the celestial luminaries. Here we may behold Deity incarnate; God manifested in human nature! Turn aside, and see this great sight; contemplate this object with fixed attention, till your heart is suitably affected by the contemplation; gaze with the eye of faith on this brighter "Morning Star," gaze on this nobler "Sun of Righteousness," till every sublunary object is eclipsed by its superior splendour. Never was Deity revealed in our nature, but in the person of Jesus Christ. He alone could be truly called "Emmanuel, God with us." "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"—a fulness that deserves the most earnest and persevering research, while it must for ever baffle finite comprehension. *This* is "the great mystery of godliness;" the study of admiring angels; the masterpiece of

the manifold wisdom of God; the wonder of the universe.

(2.) A second quality in an object, that excites our attention, and raises it to surprise and astonishment, is *novelty*. We esteem a thing the more for being *new:* there is a vivifying influence in the *freshest and rarest* appearances of nature or of mind. But, where will you find another object, worthy to be compared in *novelty*, in entire *originalty*, in *singularity* combined with greatness, with the object here presented, "the Lamb of God?" Travel in idea through creation,—climb the loftiest heights,—descend to the lowest depths,—take the wings of an angel, and fly to distant worlds: no such Being will be found as He who once tabernacled in the flesh—"the Lamb that was slain," and that is now seated at the right hand of God, as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Heaven, and the heaven of heavens could not contain him; yet he dwelt, to all appearance, in the body of an infant;—the invsible Creator clothed in human form,—the Ancient of Days cradled as an infant of days,—"He who upholdeth all things sinking under a weight of suffering,—the Lord of life, the Lord of glory, expiring on a cross,—the Light of the world sustaining an awful eclipse,—the Sun of Righteousness immerged in the shadow of death!" Never before was there such a spectacle in earth or heaven. Even inanimate nature seemed to sympathize with his last agonies; heaven itself descended to "behold the Lamb of God:" and well it might; for there was *then* a *greater* prodigy on earth than any which heaven contained. Well might angels "desire to look into the mysteries of man's redemption; and nothing but the most astonishing infatuation can prevent us from following such an example. Mankind are accustomed to admire profound philosophers, victorious heroes, or celebrated poets: but what are all such objects of admiration, in comparison with this unparalleled phenomenon, which exhibits all the attributes of Deity, adapted to human apprehensions?

(3.) Once more: objects arrest our attention, that *bear a relation to our interest.* Men are interested by

that which involves their security from evil, or promises their advancement in prosperity. Objects which are *great* command attention; those which are *new* excite curiosity; but if, in addition to its *greatness* and its *novelty*, an object bears a manifest *relation to our most* important *interests*,—if it involves our defence and safety,—if it forms the pillar of our support,—if it supplies the shield of the soul, the only hope for the guilty, the only comfort for the dying, the only prospect of eternal happiness,—surely, my dear brethren, *such* an object is calculated to awaken in our hearts the most lively affections and desires;—and *such* an object is "the Lamb of God." Not only great and wonderful in *himself*, he bears an essential relation to our most important—to our *eternal* interests. He comes to deliver us from misery, and promote us to happiness. He is competent to satisfy all the secret wants and desires of our nature. "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that are weary; and I will give you rest. I am the Bread of Life: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever; I will raise him up at the last day." These are some of *His* words: from whom beside will you hear words like these—"*the words of eternal life?*"

Jesus Christ came to save that which was lost: he laid down his life to accomplish our salvation. Nor was there any *waste* of life in that sacrifice: every portion of his infinite energy was requisite to the attainment of such an object; nothing less than the power that upholds all things was adequate to sustain the weight of human sin. He whose almighty influence diffuses itself through the heavens and earth, and preserves all orders of being, He alone endured our punishment; He, "trod the winepress alone:" He "looked, and there was none to deliver:" there existed *no other* way of salvation than that which he has opened. *The justice of the Deity, not to be propitiated by any other means, pursues the transgressor on earth and in hell; nothing in the universe can arrest it in its awful career, until it stops in reverence at the cross of Christ!*

As our salvation from the effects of sin is a deliver-

ance from a far worse than Egyptian captivity and misery, so its accomplishment required a far greater exertion of Deity than was required to arrest the billows of the Red Sea. Never did "the mighty God" more fully display the greatness of his power, than when he showed himself "mighty to *save*, even to the uttermost." He fixed the foundation on which we may build our hope of immortality, and find it to be "a hope that maketh not ashamed," founded on the Rock of Ages. He went into the shadow of death, into "the lowest parts of the earth," that he might lay *deep* the *basis of that edifice which was to rise as high as the throne of God!* "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," that we might become partakers of his own divine nature. This, my brethren, is a view of "the Lamb of God," of the last importance to be taken by us all. If you see him not in this character, you see *nothing* to any valuable purpose. You have taken hold of *nothing*, you have grasped only *shadows*, if you have not taken hold of "*Christ*, your *Life*." Flee to him; cleave to him: say of him in the sincerity of your heart, "This is all my salvation and all my desire."

There is only *one* class of beings by whom the object presented in the text is treated with unconcern; for even the legions of hell regard it with a fearful interest:—utterly to "neglect so great salvation" is the peculiar malady of impenitent sinners in the present world. But what infatuation can be compared with this? If there be any *other* door by which you may hope to enter into heaven, avail yourselves of that "door of hope" without delay. If any *other* name be given under heaven in which you may safely trust for the salvation of your soul, place your trust in that favourite name, and leave this Saviour to others; but if there exists *no other* door that can admit us into heaven than that which *He* has opened who says, "I am the door, I am the way, the truth, and the life,"—if *no other* name has been given under heaven whereby we may be saved than the name of Jesus Christ,—if *this* is the *only* dispensation of mercy; then let us turn our regards from every other refuge, and fix them on

this alone "Let all the house of Israel," let all the world, "know assuredly that this Jesus, who was crucified is both Lord and Christ; and they who believe in him are justified from all things." In the land of Israel there were *several* cities of refuge, and the criminal might flee to that which was nearest: but there exists only one for *us;* one "hope set before us, to which we must flee for refuge;" one "Man who is a covert from the storm, a shadow from the heat." In "the Lamb of God" you may obtain present peace; beholding Him, you may die with tranquillity and joy; and rise through Him, to the mansions of eternal glory. Behold, therefore, ye sinners, ready to perish, "behold the Lamb of God."

How is it possible that *those* can escape "who neglect this great salvation, which at first was spoken by the *Lord*, *God* himself bearing witness with signs and wonders, the gifts of his own Spirit? *Not* to behold *such* an object, is "to have eyes, and not to see:" *not* to attend to *such* a call, is "to have ears, and not to hear!" Better *not* to have eyes, and see; better *not* to have ears and hear; better *not* to have an understanding, a heart, a sentient nature capable of thought and feeling; better to be numbered with the brutes, or to be a mere plant, or stone, than not to believe this divine report,—than to remain one to whom this "arm of the Lord" is not revealed,—than to see in Christ "no beauty that you should desire him," to regard him "as a root in a dry ground," instead of discerning in such a Saviour, "the *power of God, the wisdom of God!*"

2. But there is a second class of persons among mankind—*those who have repented and believed:* "the Lamb of God" has an equal claim to the continued and earnest regard of his believing followers.

Some benefits we receive in such a manner that any farther attention to their cause is unnecessary; no motive but gratitude requires us to think of them again: they are complete, whether or not we recur to their origin. This is not the case with the benefits conferred by Jesus Christ. Beside the claim of *gratitude*, which ought to outlast the immediate operation of benefits received,—

(for we should think it unnatural in a son to forget his parents as soon as they were in the grave,) *here* we are dependent on our Benefactor, for a *continuity* of blessings. It is not enough to have regarded him at first as the only Source of pardon and salvation: he is as necessary to us from day to day as when we *first* believed in him. He is not a Saviour whom we may forget, having once for all received his benefits: he is the Source of continual energy through the whole of our career. The Bread of life can no more be dispensed with in the *spiritual* life than in the *natural:* in respect to the one as well as to the other, we must say, "Give us this day our daily," or, as the original word signifies, our *essential* "bread!" "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" We must apply for perpetual repetitions of our Saviour's pardoning grace, and justifying merit, corresponding with our perpetual transgressions and deficiencies. The spiritual life of a christian can only be maintained in its vigour by a ceaseless emanation from Jesus Christ. "The life which I *now* live," says the apostle Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God: it is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me." In other words, he was continually "beholding the Lamb of God." Every christian partakes of his experience, and to the end of his life feels the same need of Christ,—of his example, his doctrine, and especially of his atonement,—which he felt at first, when he fled alarmed and distressed to the foot of the cross. When the rock was smitten in Horeb, the water continued to flow through the wilderness for the constant supply of the Israelites; and they drank of that water daily until they reached the promised Canaan. "That rock was Christ;" and thus we must daily drink of the spiritual streams that flow from Him. We must look unto Him, and we shall then be *lightened, and our faces not ashamed.* When our Saviour, in his great condescension and humility, washed the feet of his disciples, Peter at first refused, saying, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." On this, our Saviour replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." "Lord," said Peter, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This our Lord

declined, observing, "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his *feet;* and now ye are clean." This implies, in the spiritual application which it was probably designed to receive, that, after having bathed at our first repentance in the fountain of that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," we must still repair to the same for constant purification from those innumerable defilements which, by our frailty, we cannot but contract in our walk through the present world. Even the clean require to be again and again purified. The sins of a single day would be sufficient to condemn us: weighed in the balance, we should be found wanting. The believer never subsists on an independent source of his own—he lives by *faith:* faith is not the reservoir, but the habitual receiver. He is continually directing his eye toward *Him* in whom it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that out of that fulness we all should receive even grace for grace; grace in the streams, corresponding with grace in the fountain. Let us live more by faith in Christ; "the just shall live by faith;" it is the safest and the happiest life. On every occasion of infirmity and distress, let us renew our application to that Saviour who said, in answer to the complaint of his apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is perfect in thy weakness." "Most gladly, therefore," adds the encouraged apostle, "will I glory even in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The moment we forget our dependence on Christ, and are puffed up with a conceit of our own merit or strength, we are in danger of falling into the snares of Satan.

3. Having dwelt the longer on the more direct and obvious application of the doctrine taught by John the Baptist in the text, to the two classes of mankind, as either impenitent sinners, or justified believers, we may *extend* the exclamation, in the third place, to the *redeemed in the world of glory.* From *them,* no less than from their brethren on earth, "the Lamb of God" claims the highest degree of admiring regard. He retains this appellation as we learn from the last book of Scripture, in his present exalted state; and it is remarkable that the name

which expresses his humiliation to the death of the cross is selected as the name under which he is adored in the world of glory: "I beheld," says John, "and lo, a multitude, which no man could number, gathered from all nations, stood before the throne and before the *Lamb:* and they cried, with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the *Lamb*, for ever and ever!" It is strange that any should be found, who, calling themselves christians, refuse to pay Jesus Christ that worship here on *earth*, which he is represented in these passages as receiving in *heaven!* Such persons, if they are admitted into heaven, will have indeed to learn a *new song*, for they must learn a *new religion!* But *you*, my dear brethren, "have not *so* learned Christ:" you know that the Redeemer holds the most distinguished place in the world of glory; he sits at the right hand of God; he is the centre of the glory that shall be revealed; his presence constitutes to the redeemed the principal charm of heaven. It was his own desire "that those whom the Father had given him may *be with him where he is*, and may there *behold his glory.*" It is only in him that the Deity is visible: "No man hath seen God, nor can see; he dwells in light which no man can approach; the only-begotten Son has declared him." Deity requires to be shaded and softened, by putting on the veil of our nature, before it can be suited to our feeble perception; the glory of the Lord must shine in the face of Jesus Christ. We read concerning the redeemed inhabitants of heaven, that they hunger no more, nor thirst any more; because the *Lamb*, who is in the midst of the throne, feeds them with the bread of life, and leads them to fountains of living water; a description which implies that Jesus Christ is himself the source of celestial beatitude.

4. But, in the fourth place, there is yet another order of beings to whom "the Lamb of God" presents an object of peculiar attention and profound admiration. *The holy angels*,—that innumerable company of spirits who

"excel in strength,"—are represented as deeply interested in the service and glory of the Redeemer. From its infancy, they watched with anxiety the fortunes of the rising church. They announced the birth of Christ with exulting strains: they ministered to Christ in the scenes of his temptation, his agony, and his burial; they cheered his apostles with the first tidings of his resurrection. "He is not here, he is risen." Even after his ascension they still lingered with a compassionate concern among his sorrowing disciples, and assured them of his final return: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall come again, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And in that day of his final return, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory," there shall be "all the holy angels with him." Accordingly, among the glories which accompany the manifestation of God in the flesh, the apostle enumerates this,—that "He was *seen of angels:*" and he represents the Father as introducing the Son into the world with this proclamation, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It is not improbable that those glorious beings are themselves, in some respect, involved in the blessings of that stupendous plan, by which "things in heaven" are gathered together in one centre with "things on earth." Angels may probably be *secured* in that felicity, to which saints are *promoted*, by the mediation of Jesus Christ: and certainly the former are described as taking part with the latter in the songs of praise to *the Lamb.* "I heard," says John, "the voice of many angels round about the throne, and their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

5. Finally, there is a Being of another order, a Being infinitely exalted above any of those already mentioned, whose attention is deeply engaged by the object presented in the text:—*God himself* is concerned, supremely concerned, in the contemplation of "the Lamb of God." To *Him* the redeemer is an object, not indeed of *admiration*, since the Divine Being can admire nothing, but of infinite *complacency* and *satisfaction.* On two conspi-

cuous occasions in the ministry of Jesus Christ,—at his baptism and at his transfiguration,—did the Eternal Father proclaim, by a voice from heaven, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: *hear Him!*" In every part of revelation we find the Son of God represented by the Father as the object of his dearest, his most intense interest. "Behold," says he, "my servant whom I have chosen! mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth take counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed; He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion:* be wise, therefore, ye kings; *kiss the Son*, lest he be angry, and ye perish!" In the opening of the epistle to the Hebrews, we read that "God hath appointed his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, the heir of all things;" and that, "to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: and Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but *thou* remainest!" It seems as if the *divine mind were concentrated—as if all the Deity were busied and intent*—in the scene of redemption and the person of the Redeemer! It seems as if the Great Eternal could find no *other* medium in which he might pour out the whole treasury of his perfections,—satisfy his infinite conceptions and desires, display and harmonize all his various attributes—his holiness, his justice, his mercy, and his love,—than Jesus Christ, "the power and the wisdom of God!" Here he shines in his complete and blended glory,—at once the "just God," and the justifying Saviour of him that believeth in Jesus Christ. Here, doubtless, is presented an object the most glorious and delightful in the universe of God! There is reason to believe that, in a *moral* (that is, in the *highest*) point of view, the Redeemer, in the depth of his humiliation, was a greater object of attention and approbation, in the eye of his Father, than when he sat in his

original glory at God's right hand; the one being his *natural*, the other peculiarly his *moral* elevation.

Encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses—summoned by so many powerful voices—let us all more earnestly than ever attend to this incomparable object: so shall we be prepared for the trials of life, the agonies of death, the solemnities of the judgement, and the felicities of the eternal world; so shall we *inherit* the unsearchable *treasures of grace and glory.*

XIV.

THE ADVANTAGES OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT CONTRASTED WITH THE BLESSINGS OF THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST.*

[PREACHED AT BRIDGE-STREET MEETING, BRISTOL, SEPTEMBER, 1822, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.]

2 SAM. vii. 16, 17.—*Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

THESE words, you are aware, are part of the message which the Lord addressed to David by the mouth of Nathan, at the time when David meditated raising the temple to the Lord. He was not indeed permitted to execute that design, but the Lord accepted him "according to all that was in his *heart;*" and commissioned the prophet Nathan to assure him, that his throne and kingdom should be confirmed, without interruption and termination, to his lineal successors, without ever again suffering such an instance of the *departure* of divine favour as that which had occurred in the removal of the family of Saul from the throne: "*Thy* throne shall be established for ever." This promise was verified to the

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

successors of David in so extraordinary a manner, as compels us to regard their history as an example of the particular intention and interposition of God's providence. The direct line of succession was preserved unbroken (with a single exception, that of Athaliah,* which was of short continuance) in the house of David; and, while the history of the kings of *Israel* (after the separation of the ten tribes under Rehoboam's reign) became a subject of some perplexity by perpetual irregularities in the succession, it is remarkable that the kings of *Judah* succeed each other in perfect order, during a period of five hundred years. It is true, that during a long interval,—from the captivity to the incarnation of our blessed Lord,—the throne of Judah, as well as that of Israel, fell into a state of deep decline and depression, so that the traces of its history are almost extinct: yet still the house of David *existed*, it was still *preserved* and *known*;—the kingdom was in a state of abeyance—of *suspended*, not *abolished*, exercise: and it was *resumed and renewed*, and improved into higher glories, in the person of *Jesus Christ*;—the true, spiritual, substantial *David*; of *whose* kingdom (it cannot reasonably be doubted by any) that of David himself was at once a *type* and a *part*. The empire of Christ was the *sequel* and *consummation* of that which had originated in the son of Jesse;—and hence our Saviour is so often styled the *Son* of *David*. The angel at his nativity announced him as "He who should be great, and should sit upon the throne of his father David, and of whose kingdom there should be no end;" while the evangelists, for the same reason, take pains to convince us that he descended from David by an exact *genealogy*. The *perpetuity*, so emphatically promised in the text and many other places, to the kingdom of *David*, immediately pointed to the everlasting reign of Messiah, to which alone that attribute could strictly belong. Our Saviour inherited this empire, not in consequence of his essential divinity, but of his *incarnation* and his *mediatorial* undertaking. His

* 2 Kings, chap xi

divinity, of which I trust all present are deeply convinced, was a *requisite* indeed, but it was not (properly speaking) the *cause* of his receiving and exercising this spiritual dominion. *Unless* he had been a person of the most Holy Trinity, it is evident he could not have sustained a sovereignty which requires universal knowledge and power: but his *Deity* could not have been the *reason* of his sustaining it; or else the Father and the Holy Spirit, being each Divine, must have inherited this throne as well as the Son of God. If *all* power was committed to him, it was (as he declares) because he was the Son of *Man*. Like the typical David, He approached and ascended to his throne, through much difficulty and suffering; he had to combat and conquer many and malicious enemies: though, during his ministry on earth, he gathered about him a few friends and followers—(as David had also done, amidst the persecutions of Saul)—it was not until he had risen from the grave, and was ready to ascend to heaven, that he could use that triumphant language, "*All* power is given unto *Me* in heaven and in earth!" The *commencement* of his reign may be dated from his resurrection, or from his session at the Father's right hand: it was *then* the Father said, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Ever since that era he has *continued* and advanced his empire; and (as the apostle observes) He must go on reigning until "he hath put all enemies under his feet."

In the following remarks let me request your candid attention—*first*, to the principal *advantages* to be expected in a well-ordered government *on earth*; and, *then*, to the *corresponding*, and infinitely more important advantages, which may be enjoyed under the *spiritual* government of Jesus Christ.

I. The first and primary advantage expected from every well-constituted human government is *security*, and the *sense* of security. The depravity of our nature has introduced such a universal selfishness and rapacity among mankind in their *natural* state, that men in every age and country have been convinced of the expediency and necessity of attempting to *organise some*

form of government for the purpose of their common security. While every individual is left to exert his own power as he chooses, none can be secure either in his property or person: it becomes absolutely indispensable, therefore, if men would escape the *intolerable* evils of such a state, to collect and embody this scattered and uncertain force of the many, in some *public depository* of power: such a provision is *necessary* for the protection and preservation of every community. Hence almost all nations, even the most uncivilized, have attempted *some* constitution of this kind, however rude, for the prevention or the redress of those injuries to which the subjects were continually liable by the passions of our nature. Where the supreme power is lodged in the person of *one*, the government is called a *monarchy;* where it is reposed in the hands of a *few*, an *aristocracy;* and where the *people* share it in common among themselves, it becomes a *democracy* Whatever may be the imperfections attaching to each of these modes of government, the *worst* is preferable to a state of society destitute of public authority and law: in *such* a state there can exist not only no *security*, but no *tranquillity;* it must be a state of perpetual apprehension and terror, in which none would feel themselves free to pursue either the arts of life or the acquisitions of trade. Even when an individual might himself escape for a time the assaults of rapacity, in such a state he would have to endure (what would be perhaps to some a still greater evil) the fearful *expectation* of his turn to suffer; and the *nearer* he beheld the acts of outrage, the deeper must be the impression of alarm on his mind,—just as (if a humble illustration may be excused) when a stone is thrown into water, while the agitation is greatest at the spot where it falls, the effect extends in the circles that are formed around, though it becomes more and more faint as they recede farther from the centre.

But the utmost degree of personal *security* that can be enjoyed under any form of civil power, is a most imperfect shadow of the *safety* which Jesus Christ bestows

upon the subjects of his *spiritual* reign. Until a man submits to *His* mediatorial authority, he remains exposed to unutterable evils. He *ought* to feel perpetual anxiety and alarm; for, in the declared judgement of God, he is in a state of *condemnation* and *death*:—"he that believeth not in the Son of God is condemned *already;*" he that is not "quickened together with Christ Jesus" is "*dead* in trespasses and sins:" he is a criminal under sentence of execution, and only respited for a brief and uncertain period; the sword of divine justice, suspended over him, may fall at any moment, and he is lost for ever. This is certainly the condition of every unconverted sinner,—every one that has not yielded himself a willing subject to Jesus Christ his Lord. But "kiss the Son;" yield yourself as such a subject to *Him;* and, from that moment, you are placed in a state of perfect *security;* you are *saved with a great salvation*,—protected from the wrath of God, from the dread of eternity, from the misery of sin; according to the prophet's beautiful description of our Saviour—"In that day a King shall reign in righteousness; and a Man shall be as a covert from the storm, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The subjects of Jesus Christ, justified by faith, have *peace* with God. The last donation he promised his disciples was peace:—"Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." "*My* peace!"—the same peace which filled the bosom of the eternal Son of God, when, having finished his work, he was acknowledged by the Father as his "beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." For, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts,"—of His Son, the first-born of many *brethren*. And (as the apostle argues) "if *God* be for us, who shall be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall *God* that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? *Christ* that *died*, yea, rather that is *risen* for us? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"—The *church* of Christ, as a collective society, is invested with absolute security; it is a city

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on whose walls is engraven the name "JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, THE LORD IS THERE!" it stands fast "like Mount Sion that *cannot be moved;*" it is founded on a *Rock*, and that Rock is Christ: He has "all power in heaven and earth" for its preservation; and not "the gates of hell shall prevail against it." But a *portion* of this general security of the body belongs to every member of it: *every* believer in Christ enjoys the same; and, as he grows in grace and knowledge, he enjoys also the *sense* of this security; he *feels* himself at peace with God; this peace *keeps* and fortifies his heart and mind against every assailing trouble; and, on the most trying occasions, he learns to say with humble confidence, "I will go forth in the *strength* of the Lord."

2. The second benefit expected from human governments is *liberty*. So far as this advantage is consistent with the former, or with the public *security*, the more largely it is enjoyed the better. Every *diminution* of liberty, except such as is necessary to our *protection* from evils which might otherwise be apprehended, is itself just so much redundant *evil*. All *wanton*, all merely *arbitrary* restrictions, upon the freedom of individuals, are to be regarded as some of the greatest calamities which mankind can sustain from each other; inasmuch as they strike directly at those principles of free thought and action which are the sources of all noble enterprise, energy, and excellence. Restraint, that cannot be justified by the production of some *greater* benefit than could be attained without it, is not imperfection; it is injustice. But, suppose the utmost possible degree of *civil* liberty enjoyed, what is it in comparison with that *spiritual*, *real* freedom, which Jesus Christ confers? The former is, at the best, only an *external*, circumstantial blessing; it does not enter into the *inner man*. But "if the *Son* shall make you free, you shall be *free indeed:* "where the Spirit of the Lord is," *there* is the only true liberty. The Christian is the genuine freeman, and none beside is such except in name. His indeed is a glorious liberty: from the moment he enters into the kingdom of grace and truth, he is loosed out of

prison, and leaves his bonds behind; invigorated with a divine strength, he purposes, and it stands fast; *he triumphs over himself;* he is victorious over the world with all its allurements or afflictions; he tramples upon the greatest tyrants,—the *powers* of darkness, the *rulers* of the disobedient; from that moment he is emancipated from the spirit of bondage; he walks at liberty; he can look beyond the grave; humble and yet confident, prostrate, and yet not confounded, even in the prospect of appearing before God; and, having overcome all, he "sits down in heavenly places with Jesus Christ,"—even as He also, having overcome all by death, sat down in glory at the right hand of his Father. This is a perfect liberty: not an evil can be felt or feared, but it may be thus removed. This is an immortal, everlasting liberty; a freedom which confers on its possessors the sublime title of "the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty."

3. The next advantage derived from a good government is *plenty*. To secure this advantage, you are aware that there are arrangements in nature, in a great measure independent of human institutions, and beyond the control of human policy. But perhaps, in this respect, there has been often much error on the part of those in power. In general it may be asserted that *human* laws should not interfere *too much:* no set of men can be supposed to understand the interests of particular classes as well as the individuals concerned understand their own interests. Every one should be left at liberty, as far as possible, to choose *his own way* in pursuing his own prosperity; and the aggregate prosperity of the nation will be best consulted by allowing the utmost scope to that of every *individual*. The prevailing tendency in every government is to legislate too much: and here, it may just be remarked, there are two obvious evils to be avoided;—those who legislate should be careful, in the first place, not to lay on too many impositions; and, secondly, not to introduce any unnecessary restrictions. The utmost that human wisdom can achieve must be imperfect: under the best system of government there

must remain many cases of poverty and distress: but in the kingdom of Jesus Christ there exists an infinite plenty of all the provisions that can be desired for all the wants of the soul. *None* are neglected here: the poorest may be enriched beyond the most splendid opulence of this world, even with "the *unsearchable* riches of Christ;" as the apostles, "though *poor*, could *make many rich*,—though they *had nothing*, they *possessed all things*." For in Jesus Christ "*all* fulness" dwells, for the supply of spiritual destitution. "Fulness" of *knowledge:* knowledge is the great distinction of the mind,—and here is all *spiritual* knowledge. Christ is himself the wisdom of God: to know him is to attain at once the highest knowledge; it is to have the spirit which "searcheth all things, even the deep things of God," and ultimately to "*know even as we are known*." "Fulness" of *holiness:* holiness is the proper riches and beauty of the soul; and the subjects of Christ are created anew in holiness after His image. "Fulness" of *consolation:* the greatest comforts that ever visited the troubled heart of man, are those which flow from Christ as their fountain; it is He who has brought to light consolations entirely new, such as had never before entered into the thoughts of men; and well might he say, "*Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in* ME." "Fulness," once more, as it respects the inheritance in reserve; —"*an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*;—of which the saints have at certain seasons a present sense and foretaste, though the light of eternity is required to display its real extent,—to display the accessible fulness of the present Saviour. These are durable treasures: they can never be taken away from us,—they form part of *ourselves*,—they are carried about with us wherever we go; no moth corrupts, no thief invades. There can exist no distinction here between the rich and the poor; no room for the frown of pride, or luxurious excess on the one side, while we behold despised poverty and pining want on the other: all is equality and unity, the consequence

of unlimited abundance,—abundance commensurate with all the demands of a perishing universe.

4. A tendency to *improvement* in *its social institutions*, is a fourth benefit which ought to accompany every well-ordered government. The best of those institutions are such as will be at once *permanent* and *progressive*, by their intrinsic wisdom and excellence,—by their adaptation to all the varying circumstances of the nation,—by their power of providing for unseen and possible emergencies: they will gradually rise from security to convenience, and then exalt convenience into ornament—into just refinement and diffused illumination: such has been the aim of the greatest legislators. Under the scorching climate of despotism all the fruits of the mind are withered: a dull monotony prevails in the moral scene; the powers of men, unable to expand, attain only a dwarfish growth: while in a *free* state, where liberty of thought is allowed to all, the faculties and virtues have room for exercise,—they flourish as in a climate congenial with their nature; and such, on the whole, is eminently the condition of this favoured and distinguished country.

But the difference between the most moral and the most flagitious of natural characters, is less than the difference that subsists between the subjects of Jesus Christ and the children of this world; because the latter is the difference between the spiritually *dead* and *living*. "The wisdom of *God*" is discovered to those only who *believe* in *Jesus Christ; all others* sit *in darkness:* for, "*after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*." We see this verified in all the history of nations. Without pretending to determine how far human reason may proceed *alone*, it may be safely affirmed that the *least instructed* portion of every country in which christianity is professed, possess far juster views of the leading truths of religion,—such as the character of *God*, the nature of *sin*, the obligation of *virtue*, the *eternal* world,—than ever were entertained by the most inquiring pagans. The great abstractions of

the gospel were never *touched* by *man*,—they remained shut up in the bosom of Deity; and there they must have remained for ever, had not *He* disclosed them by Jesus Christ, *the Light of the world.* They surpass the natural mind in its widest excursions, its profoundest researches, its sublimest elevations. Yet these are the vital essential principles of the soul,—these are the germs of all excellence and happiness,—these, wherever they are known, are found to have a purifying and an exalting influence upon mankind,—these effectually tend to *moralize* and *beautify* society. The gospel empire possesses in itself interminable energies, and tendencies to benefit its subjects. No other reason can be assigned why our country and Europe should differ so greatly from the ancient nations, and should so far excel the most cultivated among them, regarded in a moral estimate; no other reason than this, that the *light of Jesus Christ* has shone upon us like a finer Sun—*the* "*Sun of Righteousness.*" All those elysian images of prophecy which paint with so much beauty the latter days of the world, are nothing, in their substantial fulfilment, but the impress of Jesus Christ on the minds and manners of mankind, the image of Christianity embodied in society, "*the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord,*" and *righteousness* dwelling in the new-created universe.

5. The fifth and last requisite of a well-constituted government is *stability:* this is the crown of all its other advantages. Nothing can be wanting to *such* a reign but that it should *last:* and this is what the text emphatically expresses,—"*Thy throne shall be established for ever:*" as the Psalmist says of the Messiah, "*He shall reign as long as the sun and moon endure.*" In this the kingdom of David was an emblem, however faint, of that which would be erected by Jesus Christ; wonderfully preserved as was the throne of Judah, while the greatest monarchies were marked by perpetual vicissitudes: the kings of Israel were ever changing in their *line*, while the descendants of David *maintained a direct* succession. No Roman emperor, with the exception of Vespasian, was followed by his *proper* successor, during

a hundred and fifty years from the time of Julius Cæsar: they passed and chased one another like shadows. *Here*, meanwhile, "in the house of Judah," was a *preternatural* stability, destined as an image (though an imperfect image) of the fixed, indestructible empire of *Jesus Christ. His* throne has never been shaken for a moment; He has appeared without a rival in the field. Who has ever dared to question His pretensions? who has dared to challenge a comparison with Him in *prophecies*, in *miracles*, in *virtues*, in *doctrines?* Not a doubt has been entertained among competent judges of his being the *true* Messiah; all the servants of God have been ready, in reference to His dominion, to adopt the well-known exclamation of an excellent man, "*Esto perpetua!*"* Of *His* kingdom let there be no end. We may truly say, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the world stand up, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and his Messiah; but *He* shall break their bonds asunder, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There has appeared on earth no other universal interest than this;—none which has bound all hearts together as the heart of one man. In minor points we may follow a thousand different paths; but when the question is, whether JESUS CHRIST shall reign,—whether the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST shall be extended,—we are ready to forget all our distinctions,—we are all united,—we are all as one man. Not that the stability of His kingdom depends merely on human exertions: God has staked his character and all his perfections upon its establishment; He has pledged his word and oath for its success:—"The jealousy of the Lord of Hosts will do this, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Nothing but the extension of this empire is necessary to change the wilderness into a paradise, and exalt the condition of *earth* into a resemblance of *heaven.* And we have reason to hope the destined period is not re-

* The last words of Paul Sarpi, expressive of his wish for the immortal glory of his country, to whose cause he died a martyr.

mote: our children's children may live to witness the cessation of wars under the sceptre of the Prince of Peace;—to witness the *expectation of eternity and heaven* diffused among all the partakers of our nature. Lend your helping hand to the promotion of such an object. Convert base riches, "the mammon of unrighteousness," into the means of imparting spiritual treasure, the instrument of conveying "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"—into a link, an important link, in the chain that connects earth with heaven. You are not called out to endure the burden and heat of the day; you are permitted, while sitting under your vine and fig-tree, to assist, in a way at once easy and effectual, the diffusion of the privileges and immunities of this heavenly kingdom over the whole world; the recovery of a vast neglected portion of our race to the happy condition of those who are the subjects of Jesus Christ.

XV.

THE ENLARGEMENT OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.*

[PREACHED FOR THE BAPTIST MISSION, AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, AUGUST 6, 1824.]

2 COR. vi. 13.—*Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

THE Corinthian church was early infested by false teachers, who opposed themselves to the apostle Paul, and, forming their own sects and factions, endeavoured to substitute their corruptions of the faith for his pure and divine doctrine. To the cure of this disease he had addressed himself in a former, and he pursued the same design in this epistle. In doing this, he found himself compelled, though the humblest of men, to remind the

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

Corinthians of the extraordinary evidences he had given of the most devoted zeal in the cause of Christ, while he adverted to his manifold sacrifices and exertions. In the context he speaks in the affectionate language of a parent appealing to his children: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged: ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged." Endeavour (as if he said) to *meet* me upon the same ground of affectionate attachment, on which I desire to embrace you in Christ. In discoursing on these words, I propose, for our mutual advantage, first, to *illustrate* in what this enlargement consists, and, secondly, to *enforce* it.

I. With respect to the first point,---in what the enlargement mentioned in the text consists,—let it be remarked, first, that it is not to be understood as consisting in expansion of *intellect*, in that kind of mental enlargement which arises from the discoveries of science and philosophy: for this, however ornamental, or however useful it may be, is by no means necessarily connected with a divine influence on the heart. Nothing can be more familiar to our knowledge or observation, than the melancholy instances of those in whose character extreme deficiencies and blemishes of a *moral* kind form a striking contrast to brilliancy of intellect. It is sufficient, in illustration, to remind you of the examples which have been so abundantly furnished by a neighbouring kingdom. Probably, there may exist some remote tendency in intellectual enlargement, to expand the heart in benevolent sensibility; but the connexion is not so close, nor the effect so certain, as to justify any great dependence; and those who infer from the improvement of reason a proportionate advancement in virtue, will find their expectation too often frustrated.

There are others who flatter themselves that they possess superior enlargement of soul to most around them, because they entertain an equal indifference to all the vanities of human opinion in religious subjects, and feel no regard for any sect or creed. This would, no doubt,

be a very cheap and easy doctrine to embrace: by those who are indifferent, concessions are *easily* made to almost any extent; and there can be no great liberality in sacrificing truth, where no real attachment to truth is felt. In the apostle Paul we find the *reverse* of such a character: exactly in proportion as he became attached and devoted to "the truth as it is in Jesus," he exhibited the increase of his real benevolence and self-denying exertions. Genuine enlargement of charity consists in *seeking* the salvation of men,—not in complimenting them with a pretended candour. Nothing can be really more cruel, however varnished with a gloss of liberality, than the attempt to explain away the most clear and awful sanctions of divine truth, when we are expressly assured, "he that believeth, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned!" True spiritual wisdom is shown,—not in such a promiscuous confusion of all parts of truth, but in proportioning our regard for every part to its own importance and magnitude.

On the *positive* side of the subject: the christian enlargement recommended consists in a real benevolence to the *whole* church of Christ, as opposed to any selfish views of *our own* salvation, or of *our own* church, as exclusively concerned. The nearer we approximate to universal love, the higher we ascend in the scale of christian excellence. There are some, though we would hope the number is small, who live solely to *themselves:* who are so perfectly absorbed in selfishness as to neglect all around them; who regard whatever does not conduce to their own immediate gain or pleasure as so much loss: the proper sentiment we should entertain toward the spirit these exemplify, is that of supreme contempt.

Others limit their benevolence to the circle of their own family, or of their acquaintance; these rise above the former in proportion as they possess more of the enlargement we would illustrate; they mingle their affections with *others*, and identify their happiness with that of those who are most nearly connected with themselves.

Others advance far beyond this: they extend their

benevolent interest over a much *wider* circle; they feel for every case of distress, and rejoice in every opportunity of benefit that falls within their view. Their emotions are of the same kind with the former, but, taking an ampler range, they proportionably raise the moral character.

But suppose the *whole nation* to be embraced by an individual; suppose him forgetful of all merely personal or private interests, to devote himself entirely to the public benefit of his country; he holds the scales of justice,—he allays discord, alleviates the wretchedness of want, exposes his very *life* in the service of the state; and in every respect acts under the impression of his forming only a part of the whole. Here is a far higher order of character; and the reason is, that it has more of the true enlargement recommended by the apostle. And this is the utmost extent of human benevolence, apart from the divine religion of Jesus Christ. The proud Roman confined all his benevolence to the city of Rome, and regarded the remoter provinces merely as subservient to the wealth and splendour of that enormous capital; while all the world, beyond the limits of the empire, was despised as a mass of despicable barbarism. To view the world as one united whole,—mankind as one family, all nations as *one blood*,—springing from *one* Father of all, tending to *one* destiny,—this enlargement of heart, however just and natural, never entered into the views, or at least never regulated the conduct, of the most enlightened men in the pagan world.

But suppose us enabled to open our eyes to a comprehensive view of mankind as one vast family; suppose the Divine Being to have clearly discovered himself as the Universal Father, of whom all are alike the children by *nature*, and from whom all have alike departed by *sin:* suppose him to have shown us that all are in the same lapsed condition, and that one great method of recovery has been provided for all: that there is one immense society of holy beings, whether men or angels, to which we are all invited by the gospel: what should be the effect of such a revelation, but first to attach us to

God as our common centre, and then to the whole family of man as called to form the *church of God?*—for, in such a view, we come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the saints,—to God the Judge of all,—to Jesus Christ the mediator between God and man!

II. In the second place, I proceed to *enforce* this spirit of christian enlargement, by reminding you of some of its *motives and reasons.*

1. First, this spirit is perfectly *reasonable* and in harmony with *nature;*—with nature, that is, as the production of God, though not as transformed by sin. This enlargement of soul is one of the great lines of demarcation between *man* and the inferior creation—this property of his mind, by which he is capable of considering himself as part of the whole,—capable of abstracting and generalizing his ideas, and of forming a conception of contributing to the moral system. The more pious, the more truly enlightened men become, the more they feel and cherish this most important sentiment, this moral abstraction and expansion. Again we are evidently so circumstanced in the present world, that we are perpetually and inevitably *led out of ourselves:* it is impossible to lay down any practicable system of conduct which would insulate us from our species, and confine us to *ourselves* entirely. There are several natural emotions of the mind that are purely social and benevolent: such is the sentiment of *pity* or *compassion*, which it is impossible to explain on any other supposition. Pity *identifies* us with others: those who have attempted to resolve it into a *selfish* pleasure as its origin, forget that this pleasure itself must be traced to a *previous* concern for distress as its cause. It is absurd to suppose we must *first* feel the pleasure, and *then* exercise the pity; this is to mistake the effect for the cause, and to leave no *basis* for the emotion. In all our social affections, supposing them genuine and not merely pretended, we act on the ground of a *disinterested* benevolence; we make our happiness out of that of *others:* it is *their* happiness, not *our own*, that we primarily seek.

2. Further: this enlargement agrees with the genius of christianity,—of that divine system under which we profess to be forming our character. For what is christianity? It is to *believe* in the redemption of the world by *Christ* the Son of God. This is the simplest view of revelation; but this is the grand display of the *divine* benevolence: "*Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son a ransom for us.*" "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,*" &c. It is this *fact* to which your attention is directed; the fact alone is stated: those who are not moved by such a fact as this, no conceptions of thought, no eloquence of words, nothing that can be added, can reach their hearts! Such a gift of God—such a condescension of Christ—speaks for itself, or none can speak for it. Hence the apostle declares, "*The love of Christ constrains us,*" bears us along with itself in the same direction, impels us towards the *same object, identifies* us with the love of Christ to sinners, and the glory of God in their salvation. Such an example of compassionate benevolence,—of enlargement of heart,—once perceived and felt, absorbs the soul. In the spectacle of "God manifested in the flesh," the greatest extremes and contrarieties are united; majesty and meanness the most distant; the highest excellence and the lowest degradation! And the natural effect is to assimilate our hearts; the first fruit of the Spirit of Christ on his apostles was union. The earliest disciples began at once to organize themselves into a body, all standing fast in one fellowship, all minding the same thing, all drinking of the same Spirit: they gave themselves "first to the Lord, and then to each other;" they loved one another as brethren in Christ Jesus.

In the communion of the saints, such as theirs, the rich blessings of the gospel are most deeply enjoyed. At first the apostles, not sufficiently illuminated, retained some remains of their exclusive prejudices, some lingering of that selfishness which is the old plague and epidemical malady of human nature. They aimed at narrowing and monopolizing the gospel within the circle

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of Jewish proselytes. But, as the Sun of Righteousness rose with increasing brightness upon their minds, they purged off their prejudices, and came early to a perfect compliance with the injunction—"*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:*" they understood and proclaimed that there was "*neither Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free.*" And the same spirit is realised in proportion as men are christianized: they live "*kindly affectioned one toward another; forbearing and forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven themselves:* they *feel* that "*none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself.*" The most eminent saints have been shining examples of this: Moses prayed that he might be *blotted* out of God's book, rather than all the people. The apostle Paul, perhaps, above the whole apostolic college, exhibited the love of his Master imparted to his mind: he could even wish himself *accursed for the sake of his brethren;* he sympathized with every member of the christian body: "*Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*" &c.; "*beside that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*"

3. This enlarged benevolence may be farther enforced by *its aspect on our own happiness.* This, indeed, is a secondary motive,—secondary to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all things, and to the precepts of Christ, the authoritative rule of conduct. We are not to seek our own happiness in any other way than that which is consistent with these: but here it may be truly said, "He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for the gospel shall find it." The more we embody ourselves and our happiness with the interest of others. —the interests of the whole, the more in reality we consult our own happiness. In the pursuit of any merely solitary schemes, we shall reap only disappointment: if we attempt to *detach* ourselves from the general mass, to *individualize* ourselves from the community of our species, we shall be *imprisoned* and *pent in.* When the barriers of selfishness are broken down, and the current of benevolence is suffered to flow generously abroad, and

circulate far and near around, then we are in a capacity of the greatest and best enjoyment. Happiness must be sought, not so much in a direct as in an indirect way,—the way which has been marked by God and by Jesus Christ. In order to be happy in any high degree, we must abandon ourselves, according to his will, and after the pattern of his Son, to the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind. The apostle was a bright illustration of this: he laid himself out in body and soul,—he spent and was spent for others: filled with the most enlarged views of the glory of God as displayed in the salvation of men,—ravished with the ineffable beauty of redemption,—he was ready to do and suffer all things that might be required in the promotion of such an end; and the prisoner at Philippi and Rome was infinitely happier than Nero on the throne.

Some may suppose an exception must be made in favour of the private exercises of *devotion.* Devotional pleasures may be enjoyed, perhaps, in the highest degree, in retirement; but we may err in extremes even here: we must not be *epicures* even in devotion. It is possible to be so intent upon meditative duties, as to deviate from the appointed course of social usefulness, as it is made manifest in the character of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Would you escape the corrosions of domestic affliction, beware of concentring your affections within too confined a circle of beloved objects, lest, like Micah, when deprived of his images of worship, you be constrained to cry, "*Ye have taken away my gods.*" Be assured, my brethren, the more you diffuse and multiply yourselves upon a wide surface of benevolence, the better you will be guarded against the afflictions and bereavements of life. The Christian, whose heart is en larged in love to his brethren, sows a soil that cannot but yield him an abundant produce.

4. Lastly, this expanded benevolence is intimately connected with the *promotion of all public good.* It would be trifling with your attention to show that its influence on our *usefulness* is yet more *direct* than that

which it exerts on our *happiness*. There is nothing on which the present age may be more justly congratulated than its attention to public good. In the duties of *private* devotion, in abstinence, and deadness to the world, our ancestors have often greatly exceeded us: but, from various causes, they manifested much less of this enlarged christian benevolence; they pursued salvation too much as an insulated and a selfish concern. Great care was taken to explain the most vital principles of religion,—to lay well the foundations of the sinner's peace with God,—to build up the believer in all the highest views of Christ and holiness: but a zealous activity in the diffusion of christianity was reserved to be the distinguishing feature of our own generation of the church. It is wonderful to reflect that three hundred years have passed since the protestant reformation, and yet that the establishment of *missions* is, comparatively, an affair of yesterday;—that now, for the first time, christians appear to feel the foree of the command, "*Go ye into all the world.*" Hence our multitude of sabbath and national schools;—hence the Bible circulated by thousands and by millions;—hence the consecrated use of our commercial and naval advantages, to waft to the most retired and unknown corners of the earth, treasures of immensely greater value than any which had ever before been carried abroad, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

1. In conclusion, permit me briefly to suggest to you two or three important modes of attaining this christian enlargement of heart:—

1. In order to its attainment, you must, in the first place, cultivate an acquaintance with God; "*Acquaint thyself with God.*" First, draw near to the *Father*, in that new and living way which he has opened to your approach by the sacrifice of his beloved Son: then will this spirit of benevolence, like an elastic fluid, circulate from your heart to every human being: for "*whoso loveth him that begot, will also love all those that are begotten.*" Once taste for yourself that the Lord is gracious, and then go abroad, and, like the apostles, you will find that you

"*cannot but speak of what you have seen and heard:*" or like the woman of Samaria, you will call upon others, "*Come, and see a man who hath told me all things that ever I did; is not this the* CHRIST?" Begin *here:* the acts and exercises of benevolence will prove the natural emanations of this holy fountain.

2. In order to attain this principle, and to improve it, we must exercise ourselves in *prayer* for the Holy Spirit's influence. Spiritual influence from above is the true element of our sanctification; and by *this* alone can our hearts be truly enlarged in love to man. The ointment which Christ received was the Holy Spirit; and that sacred unction must descend to the skirts of his clothing —must be diffused among all his followers; then christians will follow *his* example, who preached the gospel to the *poor*, gave light to the blind, and liberty to the captives: healed the broken-hearted, and proclaimed to all around the redemption of our God.

3. Thirdly, and finally, if you would cultivate an enlarged spirit of love, connect yourself *with great objects* of beneficence. The mind takes a tincture from the objects it pursues. If you engage your attention in the concerns of christian philanthropy, your mind will be dilated in proportion to your ardour—in the ratio of cause and effect. The way of extensive benevolence is now opened and prepared by God: and it is become as much the duty of every christian to assist foreign *missions* as to assist the christian *ministry* at home. From us, as from the ancient Zion, must the word of the Lord go forth; the waters of the sanctuary must be diffused by our exertions until, rising by degrees, they overspread all lands. The only question with every one should be, What can *I* do in the support of this great cause? How can I touch and quicken the springs and movements of that vast machinery which is now in such extended operation? It is a day in which the voice of Providence to all is, "*Come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.*" The powers of darkness are awake and zealous; Satan seeks to excite his agents to new activity, "*In great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.*"

Our duty is to oppose his machinations with the only antagonist force,—to set up the kingdom of Christ against him. This has already been attempted with great success. Missionaries have gone forth (Dr. Carey in particular) in the true spirit of martyrs at the stake; they have deliberately and joyfully gone forth from their country and their home into a perpetual and voluntary exile. *You*, my brethren, are called to *no* such sacrifices: how different the circumstances in which *you* may fulfil this part of your christian vocation!—*you* have only to sit still, to draw from your private store, and distribute a portion of that superfluity with which Providence has blessed you, and thus, while you remain at home, you may touch the wheels of the machine which produces such incalculable good. It is a happy circumstance of the age in which we live, that even filthy lucre may thus be transformed into a mean of the most extensive spiritual beneficence. And what equal use can you make of your substance? When life is hastening to its close, the world itself must pass away, with all that it contains; and *true converts* to christianity are the only portion or its inhabitants, that shall emerge from its ruins and enter into "*the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness:*"—the only portion that shall be gathered together in an eternal and blessed society around the throne of God and of the Lamb. The divisions and distinctions of christians vanish away before such a prospect. The spirit of missions, indeed, has proverbially contributed to harmonize the church of Christ; and to give signs of the approach of that bright æra, when the names of sect or party shall no more be heard, but all shall form "*one fold under one Shepherd.*—Finally, remember that you are expected to act as stewards of the manifold gifts of God; that *neutrality* in a cause like this is peculiarly detestable. Remember who has said, "*He that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad:*" while He has declared, as an immutable axiom, that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive.*" Remember the apostle's solemn charge, that you "*trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy:* that you do *good, and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life.*"

XVI.

MARKS OF LOVE TO GOD.*

[PREACHED AT BRIDGE STREET, BRISTOL, SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1824.]

JOHN v. 42.—*But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*

THE persons whom our Lord addressed in these words made a high profession of religion, valued themselves upon their peculiar opportunities of knowing the true God and his will, and proclaimed themselves as the Israel and the temple of the Lord, while they despised the surrounding pagans as those who were strangers to the divine law. Yet the self-complacent Pharisees of our Saviour's age were as far from the love of God, he assures them in the text, as any of those who had never heard of his name. In this respect, *many of* "*the first were last, and the last first.*" The rejection of the gospel evinces a hardness of heart which is *decisive* against the character; and, in the case of the Pharisees, it gave ample evidence that they possessed no love of God. Had they really known *God*, as our Lord argues, they would have known *himself* to be sent by God: whereas, in proving the bitter enemies of Christ, they proved that they were in a state of enmity against God. By parity of reason, *we*, my brethren, who know God and his word in the way of christian profession, ought *not* to take it for granted that we possess the love of God, and are in the way of eternal life: the same self-delusion may over-

* Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield. These Notes present a valuable example of that species of Mr. Hall's preaching, in which, throughout the sermon, he kept pressing the application upon the consciences and hearts of his hearers.

take *us* also; and similar admonitions may be no less necessary to many present, than to the Pharisees of old. Suffer then, my brethren, the word of exhortation, while I invite each individual seriously to consider this subject, with a view to the discovery of his real character.

In proceeding to lay down certain *marks* of grace, let it be premised, that either these marks partake of the *nature* of true religion, or they do *not*. If they *do*, they must be *identified* with it, and here the mark is the *thing:* if they do *not* partake of its nature, some of them may exist as indications where genuine religion is not. It is necessary, then, that we combine a *variety* of particular *signs* of grace: any *one* taken by itself, may, or may *not*, exist, *without* true religion; but where *many* are combined, no just doubt can remain.

Whether you have the love of God in your soul, presents a most critical subject of inquiry; since the love of God will be acknowledged by all to be the great, the essential, principle of true religion. The simple question then, to which I would call your attention, is this,—"Am I, or am I not, a sincere lover of the Author of my being?"

In endeavouring to assist you in the decision of this momentous question, as it respects yourselves,

I. I shall entreat your attention while I suggest a variety of *marks* which indicate love to God; and,

II. Supposing the conviction produced by the statement to be, that you have *not* the love of God, I shall point out the proper improvement of such a conviction.

I. In suggesting various marks by which you may ascertain whether you love God, or not, I would mention,

1. The *general* bent and turn of your *thoughts*, when not under the immediate control of circumstances; for these, you are aware, give a new and peculiar bias to our thoughts, and stamp them with an impress of their own. There is an infinite variety of thoughts continually passing through the mind of every individual; of these, some are thrown up by occasions; but others, and often the greater part, follow the habitual train of our associations. It is not to thoughts of the former kind that I refer; it is to those of the latter class,—those *voluntary* thoughts which spring up of *themselves* in the mind of every person: it is these, not the former, that afford clear indication of the *general temper and disposition*. The question I would propose to you is, What is the bent of your thoughts, when, disengaged from the influence of any particular occurrence, you are left to *yourselves*, in the intervals of retirement and tranquillity, in the silence of the midnight watches, and, in short, whenever your mind is left free to its own spontaneous musings? Are the thoughts most familiar to your mind, at such times, thoughts of God and the things of God;—or, are they thoughts that turn upon the present world and its transient concerns? Are they confined, for the most part, within the narrow circle of time and sense; or, do they make frequent and large excursions into the spiritual and eternal world? The answer to *this* question will go far to decide whether you have, or have *not*, the love of God. It is impossible that such an object as the Divine Being should be absent long from your thoughts; impossible that *his* remembrance should long remain merged in the stream of other imaginations; unless you are supposed chargeable with a *decided indifference* to divine things! Unless you are destitute of love to God, you can never be so utterly uncongenial in sentiment and feeling with the Psalmist, when he says, "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, while I meditate upon thee in the night watches:" "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" When that man of God gazed upon the starry heavens, his mind was not merely wrought into astonishment at the physical energy there displayed; he was still more deeply lost in grateful admiration of the mercy of Providence as manifested to *man:*—a sinful child of dust, and yet visited by God in the midst of so magnificent a universe? But when day passes after day, and night after night, without any serious thoughts of God, it is plain that He is not the *home* of your mind, not your *portion*, *centre*, and *resting-place:* and, if this is the case, it is equally plain that you are not in a state of acceptance with Him; since nothing can be more certain than that

as our thoughts are. *such* must be our *character*. I do not ask what are your thoughts at particular *times*, or under the influence of some particular *event:* there may be little difference, on some occasions, between those who remember, and those who neglect God *habitually*. The charge against the ungodly is, that "God is not in *all* their thoughts." If there are any here who feel this charge as bearing against *themselves*, let them take that solemn warning given by God himself at the close of the fiftieth Psalm: "Oh consider this, ye that *forget* God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you!"

2. Let me request you to consider seriously how you stand disposed to the *exercises of religion*. If God is the object of your love, you will gladly avail yourselves of the most favourable opportunities of cultivating a closer friendship with the Father of your spirits: on the contrary, he who feels no regard for these opportunities, proves that he has no love to God, and will never be able to establish the conviction that God is his friend. Wherever there exists a sincere friendship, opportunities of cultivating it are gladly embraced, and the opposite privations are regretted. Where an *habitual neglect* of sacred exercises prevails, it must be interpreted as if it said, like those whom the prophet describes, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from amongst us. Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways!" If your closets seldom witness your private devotions, if your moments in retirement are languid and uninteresting,—your religion can have no hold on your heart; and the reason why your religion has no hold on your heart, is because you have no love of God. There are some whose religion sits easy and delightful upon them; its acts and functions are free and lively; there are others who seem to bear their religion as a burthen, to drag their duties as a *chain—no vital part of themselves*, but rather a cumbrous *appendage:* this is a decisive and melancholy symptom of a heart alienated from God. There is no genuine religion, no real contact of the heart with the best of beings, unless it makes us continually resort to

Him as our *chief joy*. The Psalmist is always expressing his fervent desires after God: after the light of the divine countenance, and the sense of the divine favour: but do you suppose such desires *peculiar* to the state of believers under the *Old* Testament? *No*, my brethren; there exist more abundant reasons than ever, since the gospel of Christ has been displayed in all the glorious fulness of its blessings, why our souls should be inflamed with such feelings as those which inspired the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God!"

3. If you would ascertain whether you love God, consider how you stand affected toward the *word* of God. We can entertain no just thoughts of God, but such as we derive from his own word: we can acquire no true knowledge of God, nor cherish any suitable affections towards him, unless they are such as his own revelation authorises. Otherwise we must suppose that revelation insufficient for its specific purposes, and set the *means* against the *end*. All, therefore, who sincerely love God, are *students* of his word; they here, also, accord in soul with the Psalmist, and like him, can say, "O how I love thy word! in it is my meditation all the day:" they eat it as food for their souls, and find it *sweeter than honey*. They go to it as to an inexhaustible fountain, and drink from it streams of sacred light and joy. A neglected Bible is too unambiguous a sign of an unsanctified heart; since that blessed book cannot fail to attract every one that loves its Divine Author. How is it possible to delight in God and yet neglect *that* word which alone reveals him in his true and glorious character,—alone discovers the way by which he comes into unison with us and condescends to pardon us, to love us, and to guide us through all this mysterious state of being? It is observable, that the *only* persons who are inattentive to their own sacred books, are to be found among *christians*. *Mahomedans* commit large portions of the Koran to memory; the *Jews* regard the Old Testament with reverence; the *Hindoo bramins* are enthusiastically attached to their Shaster; while *christians* alone neglect

their Bible. And the reason is, that the *Scriptures* are so much more spiritual than the religious books received by others: they afford so little scope for mere amusement or self-complacency;—they place the reader *alone with God*,—they withdraw him from the things that are seen and temporal, and fix him among the things that are unseen and eternal,—they disclose to his view at once the secret evils of his own condition, and the awful purity of that Being with whom he has to do. No wonder the ungodly man hates their light, neither comes to their light, but retires from it farther and farther into the shades of guilty ignorance. How melancholy the infatuation of such a character!

4. Estimate your character in respect to your love of God, by reflecting with what sentiments you regard the *people* of God. God has a people peculiarly his own: they are *not* of that world to which they outwardly belong,—not conformed to it in the spirit of their mind; they stand apart, many of them at least, in conspicuous conformity to Jesus Christ, and earnest expectation of the glory which He has promised. How, then, do you regard these decided followers of God? Do you shun their society with aversion and secret shame; or do you enjoy their communion as one of the most delightful among your christian privileges? Are you content merely to be the companion of those who "have a *name* to live, but are dead;" or can you say with the Psalmist, "My delight is in the excellent of the earth?" or, with the beloved disciple, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" for, as he adds, "He that loveth him that begot, loveth him that is begotten;" if you do not love the *image* which you have *seen*, how can you love the *unseen* original? If the features of holiness and grace in the *creature* are not attractive to your view, how can your affections rise to the perfect *essence?* How can you ascend to the very *Sun* itself, when you cannot enjoy even the faint *reflection* of its glory? He who knew the heart, could alone say to those around him, "I *know you*, that ye have not the love of God in you:" but though none can address

you now in the same tone of divine authority, yet you may hear it uttered by a voice within—the voice of your own conscience: you may know, without any perturbations of hope or fear, by the spiritual insensibility and inaction of your soul,—by *this* you may know, with equal certainty as by a voice from heaven, that *you have not the love of God in you!*

5. Consider the disposition you entertain toward the person and office of the *Son of God*. "If ye had loved the Father, ye would have loved me also," was the constant argument of Jesus Christ to those Pharisees whom he addresses in the text. For Jesus Christ is the express *image* of God; the effulgence of the divine character is attempered in *him*, to suit the view of sinful humanity. In the life of Jesus Christ, we see how the Divine Being conducts himself in human form and in our own circumstances: we behold how he bears all the sorrows, and passes through all the temptations, of flesh and blood. Such, indeed, is the identity, so perfect the *oneness* of character, between the *man Christ Jesus* and the *Divine Being*,—that our Saviour expressly assures us "He that hath seen *me*, hath seen the *Father;* I and my Father are *one*." The purpose for which God was manifested in the flesh was, not to reveal high speculations concerning the nature of the Deity: it was to *bear* our sorrows, and to *die* for our sins. But can *you* contemplate Him, thus stooping to your condition, thus *mingling* with every interest of *your own*, and not be *moved* by such a spectacle?—not be *attracted*, *fixed* filled with grateful astonishment and devotion,—crucified, as it were, on the cross of Christ, to the flesh, and to the world? What mark, then, of our possessing no love of *God* can equal this, that we are without love to *Jesus Christ?*—that neither the *visibility* of his divine excellence, nor his *participation* of all our human sufferings, can reach our hearts, and command our affections?

6. In examining whether you love God, examine how you are affected by his *benefits*. *These* are so numerous and so distinguished, that they ought to excite our most ardent gratitude; night and day they are experienced by

us; they pervade every moment of our being. We know that favours from an *enemy* derive a *taint* from the hands through which they are received, and excite alienation rather than attachment: but the kindness of a *friend*, by constantly reminding us of himself, endears that friend more and more to our hearts; and thus, he that has no love to God receives all his favours without the least attraction toward their Author, whom he regards rather as his enemy than his friend. But the christian feels his love of God excited by every fresh instance of his goodness. The mercies of God have accompanied you through every stage of your journey; and they are exhibited to you in his word as stretching through a vast eternity. Are *these* the *only* benefits you can receive without gratitude, and suffer to pass unregarded? *How*, then, can any love of God dwell in your bosom?

7. Consider, in the next place, in what manner you are impressed by the sense of your *sins*. The question is *not* whether you *have* any sins,—none can admit a doubt on this point; the only inquiry is, how you are affected by those sins? Are they remembered by you with a sentiment of *tender regret*, of *deep confusion and humiliation*, that you should ever have *so* requited such infinite goodness? And is this sentiment combined with a *sacred resolution to go and sin no more*,—to *devote* yourself to the service of your Divine Benefactor? If you can live without an habitual sense of penitential tenderness and reverential fear be assured you cannot love God; you have no experience of those scripture declarations—"*They shall* FEAR *the Lord and his goodness in the latter days:*" "*There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be* FEARED:" you know not yet that "*the goodness of God leadeth to repentance.*" If the mind is softened by the love of God, all his favours serve to inflame its gratitude, and confirm its devotion to his will: but he who has no love of God in his soul, thinks of nothing but how he may *escape* from God's hand, and selfishly devours all his favours without an emotion of gratitude to the Giver.

8. Finally, let me remind you to consider how you

are affected to the *present world*. If you could only be exempt from its afflictions, would you wish it to be your *lasting* home? If you could surround yourself with all its advantages and enjoyments, would you be content to dwell in it for ever? Yet you know that it is a place of separation and exile from the Divine Majesty;—that it is a scene of darkness, in comparison with heaven, very faintly illuminated with the beams of his distant glory;—that its inhabitant is constrained to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but mine eye hath *not* yet *seen* thee;"—while *heaven* is the proper dwelling-place of God and his people! Could you then consent to remain here always, without ever *seeing as you are seen*,—*seeing light in his light*,—without ever *beholding his glory*; without ever drinking at the fountain, and basking in *that presence which is fulness of joy, and life for evermore?* always to remain *immersed* in the shadows of time—entombed in its corruptible possessions—*never* to ascend up on high to God and Christ and the glories of the eternal world! If such is the state of your spirit, you want the essential principle of a christian—you want the love of God. The genuine christian, the lover of God, is certain to feel himself a "*stranger on the earth.*" No splendour, no emolument of this world,—not all the fascinations of sensual pleasure,—can detain his heart below the skies, or keep him from sympathizing with the sentiment of the Psalmist: "*As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I wake in thy likeness.*" I do not ask whether you have, at present, "*a desire to depart:*" perhaps you may not be as yet sufficiently prepared and established to entertain so exalted a desire; but still, if you have received a *new* heart, you will deprecate nothing so much as having your portion in *this* life,—as having your eternal abode on *earth*. It is the character of faith to dwell much in eternity: the apostle says, in the name of all real believers, "*We look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.*"

II. And now, my brethren, supposing the preceding remarks to have produced in any of you the conviction *that you have not the love of God in you*, permit me very briefly to point out the proper *improvement* of such a conviction.

1. First, it should be accompanied with deep *humiliation.* If you laboured under the privation of some bodily organ, requisite to the discharge of an animal function, you would feel it as in some degree a humiliating circumstance; but what would be any defect of this kind, however serious, in comparison of that *great want* under which you labour—the want of piety, the calamity of *a soul estranged from the love of God!* What are all other subjects of humiliation, compared with *this* —a *moral fall*, a *spiritual death in sin:* and this, unless it be removed, the sure precursor of the *second death—eternal ruin!* "*This is a lamentation indeed, and it shall be for a lamentation.*"

Suppose the children of a family, reared and provided for by the most affectionate of parents, to rise up in rebellion against their father, and cast off all the feelings of filial tenderness and respect; would any qualities those children might possess, any *appearances* of virtue they might exhibit in other respects, compensate for such an unnatural, such an awful deformity of character? Transfer this representation to your conduct in relation to God: "If I," says he, "am a *father*, where is my fear? if I am a *master*, where is my honour?" "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me: the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

2. And let your humiliation be accompanied with *concern and alarm.* To be alienated from the Great Origin of being; to be severed, or to sever yourself from the essential Author and element of all felicity, must be a calamity which none can understand, an infinite woe which none can measure or conceive! If the stream is cut off from the fountain, it soon ceases to flow, and its waters are dissipated in the air; and if the soul is cut

off from *God*, it *dies!* Its *vital contact* with God,—its spiritual union with the Father of Spirits through the blessed Mediator, is the only life and beauty of the immortal soul. All, without this, are *dead*—"*dead in trespasses and sins!*" A living death—a state of restless wanderings, and unsatisfied desires! What a condition theirs! And, oh! what a prospect for such, when they look beyond this world! Who will give them a welcome when they enter an eternal state? What reception will they meet with, and where? What consolation amidst their loss and their sufferings, but that of the fellow-sufferers, plunged in the same abyss of ruin? Impenitent sinners are *allied* to evil spirits; they have an *affinity* with the kingdom of darkness; and when they die, they are emphatically said to "*go to* THEIR OWN *place!*"

3. This is an *awful* state for any to be in at present; but, blessed be God, it is not yet a *hopeless* situation. Let no person say, "I find by what I have heard, that I do not love God, and, therefore I can entertain no hope." There is a way of return and recovery open to all. Jesus Christ, my dear brethren, proclaims to you all, "I am the way. No man can come to the Father but by me:"—but every one that will may come by this new and living way; and, if you lose life eternal, you lose it because,—according to his words just before the text,—because "you *will* not come to Christ that you may have life." If you feel the misery, deformity, and danger of your state, then listen to his invitation, and embrace his promise. See the whole weight of your guilt transferred to his cross! See how God can be at once the just and the justifier! Take of the blood of sprinkling, and be at peace! *His blood cleanseth from all sin:* He will send that Spirit into your heart, which will manifest him to you; and where that Spirit is, *there* is *liberty* and holy love. *He* is the *mystical* ladder, let down from heaven to earth, on which angels are continually ascending and descending, in token of an alliance established between God and man. United by faith to Jesus Christ, you shall become *a habitation of God through the Spirit:* the Father will make you a

partaker of his *love*, the Son of his *grace*, angels of their *friendship:* and you shall be preserved, and progressively sanctified; until, by the last change, all remains of the grand epidemic source of evils shall be for ever removed from your soul; and the *love of God shall constitute your eternal felicity.*

XVII.

THE JOY OF ANGELS OVER A REPENTING SINNER.*

[PREACHED AT BROADMEAD, BRISTOL, SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1824.]

LUKE XV. 7.—*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*

THE ministry of our Lord was exercised, and his success obtained, principally among the lower classes of mankind. We read that, in opposition to the supercilious contempt of the Pharisees and rulers, "the common people heard him gladly:" the ancient prediction being thus verified, that, "to the poor the gospel should be preached." Accordingly, Jesus Christ, adapting the style of his preaching to the state of his hearers, borrowed many familiar illustrations of the truths he taught from the scenes of nature and from the occupations of ordinary life, and generally used the parabolic mode of instruction: yet his illustrations were always delivered in a manner consistent with the dignity of his doctrine and character, and they tended to show that his religion is perfectly adapted to make all mankind wise unto salvation.

The proud Pharisees took offence at this attention of our Saviour to the common people, and urged it as an objection against him that he received sinners and ate with them. Our Saviour replied to their objection by

* Printed from the notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

supposing the case of a shepherd, who, if he had lost a single sheep of his flock, would immediately leave all the rest, that he might recover that *one;* and, having recovered it, would feel a greater degree of satisfaction than the possession of all the rest could bestow. After this comparison, our Lord descended to another yet more humble, which could have occurred to no person that was not more conversant with cottages than courts; the comparison of the poor woman that, on the recovery of one lost piece of silver, would be filled with a joy which she could not forbear inviting her neighbours to participate. From these familiar images Jesus Christ lifts our imagination at once to heaven itself; assuring us that, in a similar manner, "*Joy shall be in heaven, joy among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth,*" and this a "*greater joy than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.*"

In endeavouring to unfold this passage for our mutual advantage, I propose to consider, briefly, the four following subjects of inquiry; first, where we are to look for these ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance; secondly, why the event of one sinner's repentance should fill the angels with joy; thirdly, why this joy should be greater than that with which they contemplate so large a number of righteous persons; and, fourthly, why the seat of this should be placed in heaven; after which, in the last place, I shall conclude with a brief improvement.

1. The first point of inquiry is, Where are we to find these ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance? The forerunner of Jesus Christ came preaching the doctrine of repentance; and Jesus Christ himself repeated that doctrine, saying to all, *Except ye repent ye shall perish.* When he sent forth his apostles, he taught them to circulate, wherever they went, the solemn admonition, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is come unto you.* They constantly inculcated repentance as universally necessary; *Now*, said they, *God commandeth all men every where to repent.* Yet the text makes mention of ninety-nine persons who *need no* repentance. Where then are

we to find these? Two solutions have been proposed; each in itself appears satisfactory, but each must be taken separately: proceeding on different grounds, they are not capable of being combined.

First, the persons concerned have been supposed to be persons who have already repented. Divines are accustomed to divide all persons into three states of character,—as careless sinners, awakened penitents, or confirmed believers. The persons in question, who need no repentance, are supposed to have passed through the two former of these states of character, and to be now in the third; they are neither careless sinners, nor penitents newly awakened to a sense of guilt—they are confirmed believers; and they need no repentance, no entire change of their hearts, simply because they have already experienced it: as the apostle exhorts the Hebrews, they *go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance.* It is not intended to convey an idea that they have not daily sins to call for daily penitence, but merely that, having once been effectually convinced of sin, and converted to God by a true repentance, they may justly be said not to need that change any more. There is nothing unnatural or improper in this interpretation: there are many such persons, it is to be hoped, in every christian society: many who, having passed through that mysterious and vital process of divine influence on the soul, which we call repentance, cannot, strictly speaking, experience or require it a second time.

The other solution is, that Jesus Christ is here speaking hypothetically; that he makes a supposition, which has no existence in reality, merely for the sake of argument. No doubt many instances of such suppositions occur in the discourses of our Saviour. It is a mode of statement which exactly concurs with another part of the parables contained in the same chapter. I refer to the character of the elder son. Is there any individual to be found, either in the christian profession, or in civil life, who exhibits the archetype of that elder son?—any one to whom the Father could with propriety say, "Son, thou hast been always with me, and all that I have is

thine?" I am aware that the conduct of the Pharisees has been generally considered to be represented by that of the elder son: this may be true; yet it is evident the Pharisees are here represented not such as they really were, but such as they vainly imagined themselves to be. In strict reality, nothing could be more unlike than the original and the picture: our Saviour, to enforce his illustration, gave them credit for their pretensions to righteousness; but nothing could be more remote from the real character of those, before whom even *the publicans and harlots* would enter into the kingdom of heaven After the same manner of speaking, it has been supposed, Jesus Christ here introduces the idea of ninety-nine righteous persons; no real persons were designed by the expression; he used it merely for the purpose of assailing the arrogant conclusions of the Pharisees respecting themselves: supposing them to be of such faultless character, still, argues our Lord, the spectacle of one penitent sinner would inspire greater joy in the hearts of heavenly beings than the spectacle of ninety-nine such persons.

3. The second inquiry is, Why this spectacle should have such an effect on heavenly beings, and particularly on angels? One might have thought it more probable that no event on earth, at least none in which one individual alone was concerned, would have any effect on beings of so elevated an order; that such an occurrence would not even be known in the celestial court; still less that it would occasion an increase of joy in those abodes of eternal blessedness. But revelation has withdrawn the veil from the invisible world, and opened a communication between earth and heaven. It exhibits to us an order of holy and glorious beings, denominated angels; and these are represented as instruments employed in executing the divine purposes respecting man; they are Christ's angels; they take a deep concern in the success of his church, and the gathering in of his redeemed: *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation?* In one passage, indeed, though somewhat obscure, the apostle

Paul seems to insinuate that angels are invisibly present in the solemn assemblies of the faithful.* Though their interference in the affairs of the church is now silent and unperceived, there is no reason to suppose it to be withdrawn, or less real than when it used to be accompanied with the splendour of miraculous circumstances; any more than there is reason to believe those infernal spirits, against whose temptations we are so often warned, to be now no longer awake and active against us. Heavenly beings are witnesses of these assemblies; they listen to the ministry of sacred truth; they anxiously trace its effects on the consciences and hearts of men; and, whenever a salutary impression is produced, whenever the conscience is convinced, and the heart opened to repentance, they bear the glad tidings to their companions in felicity, and *then is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* Do you ask, why they are thus rejoiced by such an event? For the same reasons, I reply, that the most pious among men are accustomed to rejoice when they hear of the conversion of a sinner to God. Such a change brings, they are sensible, a new servant to their Lord; it is the accession of a new member to that great society of which God and his Christ are the head: and none can be a sincere, loyal subject of the King of kings without wishing his laws to be obeyed, his kingdom to be extended; because the glory of the Redeemer is realized in the multitude of the redeemed. Besides which, the benevolence of angels is proportioned to their elevation in wisdom and holiness: they approximate, far nearer than the most exalted of the saints, to the unlimited benevolence of the divine character. God is love, and angels are emanations of that Divine Spirit: no taint of selfishness mingles with their feelings and their views: they see distinctly the connexion that subsists between repentance and happiness: they see that when the sinner repents, he *first comes to himself*—he takes the first step in that progress which tends toward their own ineffable felicity—he enters on that way in which God

* 1 Cor. xi. 10.

is to be found: while impenitence endangers the eternal welfare of the soul, threatens its forfeiture of immortal happiness, its subjection to irreparable misery. It cannot be but that the repentance of a sinner, regarded as it is by angels as the birth-day of a new existence, the precursor of immortality, the embryo of endless bliss, the introduction to the element of perfect peace and rest, the vestibule of heaven,—it cannot but be that this should communicate delight to those holy and benevolent spirits.

The Scriptures clearly reveal to us, whether or not you believe the doctrine, that there exist in this world two great kingdoms; at the head of one of which kingdoms is Jesus Christ, at the head of the other, Satan; and that all mankind, without exception, are the subjects either of the one or the other of these mighty opposite empires. Now, repentance is the line of demarcation betwixt the two; it is that which marks the confines of light and darkness,—of the heavenly and the infernal state. From the moment a sinner truly repents, he makes a transition from death to life, spiritual and eternal: from that moment Satan loses a vassal, and Jesus Christ gains a servant. It is impossible for beings such as angels to remain indifferent spectators of such an event; impossible for them not to feel joy when they see the balance changed in favour of their own cause. Victory and gain, in every instance, are attended with feelings of joy; but no spoil can be deemed precious, no deliverance worthy of triumph and exultation, in comparison with that which is achieved when repentance finds place in the heart of a human being!

3. In the third place, it is natural to ask, Why the joy entertained by angels, on occasion of a single penitent's recovery, should be greater than the joy they derive from the spectacle of ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance? It must be confessed that the amount of good enjoyed by the ninety-nine righteous persons, is intrinsically greater than that which can be supposed to be enjoyed by a single penitent. Theirs, besides its being diffused among ninety-nine persons, is

a confirmed and advanced state of happiness; whereas his is merely the first commencement, the embryo of happiness, and this merely in one individual. *How* then, it may be asked, can the degree of joy excited in the breasts of angels by the repentance of a single sinner, be justly represented as greater than that which is excited by the view of ninety-nine persons who continue to enjoy a state of far more established and exalted felicity? In answer to this, let it be observed, that, in all probability, it is the prerogative of the Deity alone to be affected by things according to their real, absolute magnitude and importance, without the smallest regard to the circumstance of time, without receiving any deeper impression from an occurrence because it is of recent date; it is probable that it is only in His infinite intellect that all things appear in their essential nature, without the difference of impression which arises to our minds from an event being more or less distant in respect to time: "a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years, with the Lord;" *His* mind being omnipresent in immensity, and grasping all things as in a point. But beings whose perceptions are progressive, as the perceptions of all finite beings must be, are necessarily more powerfully influenced by a recent event than by one that has long past; for a time it occupies and engrosses their whole attention, and swells upon their view far beyond its natural dimensions. Now angels are finite beings; they are affected as such, in their sensations, by the proximity and distance of objects; and, if they are thus affected in their sensations, they must be similarly influenced in their sympathies, since proportionate sympathies always follow sensations.

The penitent sinner has enter upon a new existence,—he has commenced an entirely new course of feeling, thought, and action; and he is yet, when he ceases to be a penitent, to pass into the new and more advanced character of one who delights in God. Angels are affected, like ourselves, by the extraordinary and astonishing change that has taken place. They behold one who has made an eternal transition from death unto life—one

who has turned his back on the kingdom of darkness for ever, and set his face toward the light of God; who has begun his march from the land of his captivity toward the heavenly Canaan; who has chosen God for his portion, Christ for his Lord, saints and angels for his friends and society; who is *come to mount Sion, the city of the living God*, to their own society and that of the redeemed—to the presence of God! He has obtained a new mind, a new heart; which, instead of being *a nest of vipers, a cage of unclean birds*, is become *a temple of the Holy Spirit*, filled with divine inspirations and acceptable devotions! Can we wonder that such a change should deeply affect the highest order of finite minds, and cause the angels of God to exclaim with rapture, *This our brother was dead and is alive; he was lost, and is found?* If all are unrighteous,—if all are by nature dead in sin and condemnation,—if there is no escape without repentance,—then repentance must be of all things the most essential to a sinner; and such it is expressly declared by Him who said, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish!*

But why, you ask, is the joy greater for the repentance of one sinner than for the perseverance of ninety-nine saints? The ninety-nine righteous persons only stand where they stood before; or rather, they only go on in the same path in which they had long walked; the only change they can experience is an accretion, an augmentation of the principles and blessings in which they were already confirmed; there is no abrupt and surprising revolution, no essential change; but the first conversion of a sinner to God is an event never to be forgotten; it is an æra in eternity, it is registered in heaven!

4. The fourth and last point of inquiry is, the reason why Christ places the scene of this joy in heaven. The repentance of a sinner is a subject of joy on earth; of joy to the faithful minister who has been perhaps the honoured instrument of producing the change; as the apostle Paul, addressing the converts of his ministry says, *What is our joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of the Lord?* Or, as the beloved disciple

says, *I have no greater joy than to see my children walk in the truth.* There is joy in the christian church on every accession of new converts; these, if genuine, constitute the true adornment of every christian society; in these its real prosperity consists: and melancholy is the state of that church, however externally prosperous, which does not value and desire the increase of its sincere penitents far above every other sign of its prosperity! But when it is said that *there is joy in heaven over every repenting sinner*, the assertion is to be understood in a meaning far more just and adequate. Repentance is there weighed in other scales than here. Angels view the change that is effected in a sinner's position before God, by repentance from higher ground, —in all its aspects and dimensions, in all its bearings and consequences. They appreciate the greatness of that happiness which their fallen brethren have lost for ever, which they themselves enjoy, and which is now in reserve for the converted sinner. They taste the joy which is set before him; they dwell in the glory which is become the object of his desires; they *know* that whatever may be his present sufferings, they are light and merely for a moment,—they will ere long be exchanged for unspeakable pleasures,—he will have *all his tears wiped away by* God himself! Angels penetrate far deeper than it is in the power of the most exalted saints on earth to penetrate; *the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths*, of that eternity, which is the seal and crown of the felicity promised to every real penitent, which stamps it an eternal felicity,—even *eternal life, the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* They have long been engaged in contemplating the beauty of that holiness which dwells in God as its original; they have long enjoyed him as their portion, as their all; they have been exploring the true fountain of happiness through a long succession of ages, and they find it still as fresh and inexhaustable as ever; they have long basked in the beatific splendours of uncreated light! They comprehend the mysterious and undefinable value of the soul; its intense susceptibilities as a rational, moral accountable

substance, incapable alike of extinction and unconsciousness through infinite duration: these things are clear to their view, though they are obscure and confused to us, who *are of yesterday and know nothing*,—to us who are *crushed before the moth.*

5. In the last place, let me attempt a brief improvement of the subject which has now been presented. And, first, we may hence perceive the very great dignity and importance which attaches to the christian ministry. This, is, beyond all doubt, the highest, the most sublime and sacred employment in which the sons of men can be engaged. Its greatness, however, arises not from any circumstances of a secular kind, not from any worldly splendour but from its purely spiritual character,—from its immediate bearing on human salvation. That salvation, in all its parts, is entirely the work and gift of God; but in this, as in his own works, he employs created instruments; and the chief instruments by whose medium salvation is communicated,—by whose operation the great change of repentance and conversion is effected,—are the ministers of the gospel. The object they habitually have in view, as preachers of the word, is to persuade men to lay down the arms of their unnatural and guilty rebellion and enter into the covenant of a merciful God: they stand as the commissioned *ambassadors of Christ:* their ministry is expressly a ministry of repentance and reconciliation *through the blood of the cross;* and it is powerful, in every instance, either as *a savour of life unto life or of death unto death.* It is an awful reflection, that *if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;* that we are called *a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved and in them that perish!* It may well make us ready to sink under the weight of our responsibility, while we exclaim with the apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Oh, how anxious should this reflection make us, to whom this ministry is committed, that the blood of immortal souls may not be charged against us; since the word we deliver cannot return void to Him that sent it, but must accomplish, in every case, its destined purpose; issuing either in the

accumulation of guilt, or the increase of grace, to every one who hears it! And repentance, let it be remembered necessary as it is to salvation, is taught alone by the gospel; it is only to be learned in the school of Christ. Philosophy knew nothing of repentance toward God, any more than of faith in Jesus Christ; it excited no salutary alarm in the conscience; it opened no view of the terrors of a righteous God. It is the gospel that has first done this; it has awakened a fear which becomes its own cure, and has first taught the sinner to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* The gospel has withdrawn the dark veil of nature's ignorance which hid God from our view, at the same time that it has *brought life and immortality to light in Jesus Christ!* If it fail to lead you to repentance it fails of every thing for which it was designed; when He who had *the keys of death and hell* in his hand, could employ no stronger motive to repentance than that which he employs in assuring us, *If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall* DIE IN YOUR SINS!—*Ye shall* DIE IN YOUR SINS! But Jesus Christ, my brethren, came expressly to save you from this dreadful destiny; he came down from heaven to *give life unto the world;* to quicken those that were *dead in trespasses and sins;* and He is now *exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance as well as remission of sins;*—a repentance unto life never to be repented of! There is enough here, surely, to awaken both your fear and your gratitude; to excite both a sense of the value of your soul, and a sense of the love of your Saviour. And these are motives peculiar to the gospel: to these motives it owes all its triumphs over the hearts of men; it is the gospel of your salvation; and well might it be ushered into the world by angelic beings with that annunciation, *Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth! Good-will towards men!*

2. In the second and last place, it is not necessary to collect motives to repentance from the Scriptures; the text alone is sufficient to show its importance: the simple fact, recorded in the text, is itself equivalent to a host of arguments—the fact that the only, or at least the chief

event on earth, which excites joy in heaven, in the mind of God and of the holy angels, is---the repentance of a sinner! The barrier that separates eternity from time is impassable; the world beyond the grave is enveloped in utter obscurity. Had not revelation broken the silence of nature, never should we have known that a single event, which takes place in the present scene, is noticed in heaven: but now we are informed that there are occurrences on earth which excite deep attention and emotion in that higher world; and what are these? We are assured by the text that it is not the advancement of knowledge and civilization, not the splendours of art, nor the extension of empires and commerce, that attract the regard of those celestial intelligences; they are interested by objects of a very different description; they *rejoice over one sinner that repenteth!* The repentance of one solitary sinner, his conversion from the error of his way, has greater charms in the view of angels than even the spectacle of their own happy society, or that of all those saints on earth who persevere in pursuing the way to life eternal. And if the mere contemplation of this change is so sweet to angels in heaven, oh, how sweet must the experience itself be to the penitent!---for he it is who *tastes that the Lord is gracious*---who tastes the unspeakable comfort that arises from the pardon of his sins and peace with God; he it is who goes on from strength to strength, from smaller to larger discoveries of the blessings that are in God and his Christ; he it is that *comes to God, comes to Jesus the mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling; to the general assembly and church of the first-born: to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to an innumerable company of angels.* Hence none ever experienced this change indeed, who did not consider it far above every other event of his life: he may have experienced many other changes, and some of a very pleasing kind; he may have passed from a state of poverty and hardship to a situation of affluence and every earthly comfort; or he may have been raised up from a bed of pain and sickness to the enjoyment of ease and health; but, if he is a true christian, if he has ever been

a true penitent, his conversion is an event that can never lose its importance in his regard; the season of his first repentance is an æra in the records of his memory; it must always appear as a brilliant spot in his retrospect; it hallows the place and the hour that witnessed it; it lays him under a deeper, a more sacred obligation to the minister or the friend that was the honoured instrument of producing it, than he can entertain towards any inferior benefactor. And well it may; for it is a change of which the happy consequences shall endure for ever: all other benefits are temporal and transient; this alone is eternal; its value will be just as great when thousands of ages shall have passed away as it was at the first moment. Do you suppose those penitents, who occasioned this joy in heaven at the first preaching of the gospel, have found any abatement in their happiness by the lapse of eighteen centuries? No, my brethren! that happiness is just as fresh as on the day when they first *entered into the joy of their Lord.* The experience of eternity has rather increased than diminished its value. It is repentance that changes the whole aspect of things, whether present or future. The conviction that we have repented, that we have experienced that real, vital conversion which places us in a state of friendship with the Author of our being---this conviction lightens all afflictions, brightens every prospect, gives peace in the hour of death, and, at the last day,---amidst the wreck of elements, amidst the dissolution of the material heavens and earth,---the spark of celestial immortality that was first kindled in repentance, will emerge from the darkness of the sepulchre, and shine for ever in *the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness!* Ah, my brethren! the time is coming, and may be very near, when you will have nothing left to do, but to lay down your head on your death-bed pillow; and then, it is probable, if not before, yet then, you will begin to feel the force of what has now been suggested on the subject of repentance. In that hour the least apprehension that you are a real penitent,---the faintest hope that you have laid hold on Christ with a true heart,---will

give you far more satisfaction than any event that ever occurred to your attention. Oh, then, let none dismiss this subject with indifference: let none have listened to this discourse without being prevailed upon to retire this evening, and in the stillness of his chamber, and the solitude of his soul, to pour forth a fervent, importunate prayer, that he may be numbered among those penitent sinners who here occasion joy in heaven, and who will hereafter obtain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

XVIII.

NATURE AND DANGER OF EVIL COMMUNICATIONS.

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, IN AUGUST, 1824.]

1 COR. xv. 33.—*Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners.**

THIS passage is taken from a heathen poet, Menander, and shows that Paul was not unacquainted with the literature of the pagan world. By this he was peculiarly fitted for some parts of his work, being destined to bear the name of Christ before princes, magistrates, and philosophers, especially in the Roman and Grecian parts of the earth. The maxim accords with universal experience, and was worthy, therefore, of being adopted as a portion of those records of eternal truth, which are to be the guide of mankind in all succeeding ages.

The connexion is not that in which we should have expected such a maxim to be inserted, it is in the midst of a very affecting and instructive view of the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting; but the occasion of it was this: the Corinthians had received, from the intrusion of false teachers, principles which militated against that great doctrine. They had been taught to

* This sermon has been prepared by collating and blending the notes of the Hon. Mr. Baron Gurney with those of Joshua Wilson, Esq.

explain it away, and to resolve it merely into a moral process which takes place in the present world; interpreting what is said of the resurrection of the dead in a mystical and figurative manner. The apostle insinuates, that it was by a mixture of the corrupt communications of these men with the christian church, and the intimate contact into which they had permitted themselves to come with them, that they had been led off from the fundamental doctrine of the gospel, and rejected a primary part of the apostolic testimony. "For if there be no resurrection of the dead, then," as he observed, "is Christ not risen, and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins."*

We see, that notwithstanding the apostle had planted pure christianity among the Corinthians, and had confirmed it by the most extraordinary miracles and supernatural operations; yet such was the contagion of evil example and corrupt communication, that the members of the Corinthian church, in a very short time, departed from the fundamental articles of the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ; and hence we may learn the importance, nay, the necessity, of being on our guard in this respect, and of avoiding such confidence in ourselves as might induce us to neglect the caution here so forcibly expressed. "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners."

Among the first things accomplished by our blessed Lord after his ascension, was the organization of the christian churches by his word and Spirit through the instrumentality of his apostles. These he placed under suitable laws, appointing proper officers, and regulating them by the simple maxims of mutual love, forbearance, and charity: and no doubt the great design which he had in thus forming christian churches was to furnish room for the cultivation of a social spirit, without that danger of infection which would spring from it in a world abounding with evil examples, and actuated by

* 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14, 17.

evil maxims. Knowing that man is naturally a social creature, and prone to unite with his kind, he was pleased to form a select society, wherein the exercise of the social affections might tend to the purification of the heart, the sanctification of the character, and the perfecting of man in the image of God and the Redeemer. A principle of action so efficacious as that of the social affections, by which men are perpetually assimilating themselves to one another, was not to be neglected by the great founder of our religion. He has consecrated it in the formation of christian churches, and thus erected the strongest rampart against the incursions of evil example, and the influence of a "world that lieth in wickedness."

In considering these words, there are three things to which I would request your serious attention:

In the first place, I shall state what those communications are which may be termed "evil."

Secondly, Explain the way in which they operate so as to "corrupt good manners:" and

Thirdly, Shall endeavour to enforce the warning, or exhortation, insinuated or comprehended in the passage, "Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners."

I. It will be natural to inquire, What are "evil communications?" It is plainly impossible, in the present state of the world, entirely to avoid intercourse with bad men; this would be, as the apostle himself observed, "to go out of the world." "I write unto you," said he, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "not to company with fornicators; howbeit, not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world: but now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat."* The intercourse of society must be main-

* 1 Cor. v. 10, 11.

tained, without respect to the characters of men, to such an extent as the business of life requires. No one can possibly avoid occasional intercourse with those with whom habitual communications would be in the highest degree dangerous. If he is led into such society by the demands of his calling, the very necessity of going into it, in distinction from his choice of it, will excite a degree of caution well calculated to counteract the contagion; and, being in the path of duty, such a person may expect to be upheld by the succours of divine grace, which are never withheld from those who commit themselves to the guidance of God. An unsocial spirit, that would lead us, like the Essenes of old, into the solitudes of the wilderness, and to desert the active stations of human society, though it would be accompanied with the advantage of being entirely exempted from evil example, would be utterly inconsistent with the genius of christianity, and the example of our great Lord. But still, we must not, under pretence of yielding to the necessary calls of business, cultivate and cherish that "evil communication" which is here said to "corrupt good manners."

1. Now, in the first place, that communication may be justly regarded evil, in the highest sense, which is corrupt in relation to its immediate tendency to taint the purity of the mind by associations of a lascivious and sensual nature. That conversation which is calculated to bring before the mind images of indelicacy and impurity, which owes its zest and force to the power of such associations, and is adapted to familiarize the thoughts to that from which a pure and chaste imagination recoils, must be considered in the highest degree of this kind; and how large a proportion of many societies owe their attraction almost entirely to this ingredient! The real christian will never, for a moment, put himself, voluntarily, into a society where this contagion prevails; and will take the earliest opportunity of escaping from it, if by accident he is thrown into such company.

2. But, short of this, that may be denominated evil communication where the parties are of such a character

that religion is not adverted to, or thought of in a serious or practical manner, where it has no hold upon the mind, where the fear of God is evidently dismissed, and there is no scriptural rule of action.

The mere absence of religion is sufficient to constitute that evil communication against which we are guarded. Those persons whose conversation is not plainly vicious, but who appear to have no true fear of God, no regard to the obligations of religion, who evidently live "without God in the world," without any habitual reference to a future state, must be considered as constituting a class of characters, with which he who earnestly seeks his salvation will not voluntarily come into contact. It is not to be supposed that the christian can always select, even as the associates of his confidential hours, those who are partakers of divine grace, those who are really converted to God; though, as far as possible, it will be his wisdom to select such, and such only: yet it is not too much to say, that he should avoid, as much as possible, any intimate connexion with those who appear to be not at all influenced by the considerations of religion, and seem entirely strangers to its hopes, fears, restraints, and prohibitions; though their conduct may be in other respects unexceptionable and inoffensive.

3. It is almost unnecessary to observe, that is an evil communication, in a high degree, which abounds with objections to christianity, and is calculated to produce a doubt, either of its divine origin, or of the certainty of its most important truths. He who wishes to have his faith confirmed in the evidence of christianity, will never form an intimacy with those who are opposed to that evidence; who have thrown off the restraints of religion, renounced allegiance to the Saviour, and adopted the loose and sceptical doctrines of a licentious age.

4. And to this class we may add those who have discarded the peculiar doctrines of christianity, and who are envenomed with an antipathy to them, so as to be desirous, on all occasions, to multiply proselytes, by winning men to their own persuasion in regard to the distinctive points in which they are at variance with real

christians of all ages. Such as have endeavoured to corrupt the fundamental principles of christianity must, in the esteem of persons who hold those principles sacred, be regarded as tempting to "evil communications." To this caution we are led by the context; for those who corrupted the faith of the Corinthians were not such as had rejected christianity altogether, not such as had entirely relapsed into heathenism or Judaism, but those who had denied the fundamental testimony of the apostles, contradicted the primary truths of christianity, and introduced another and different gospel from that which the apostles had promulgated. The apostle John lays down an injunction on this subject, which must be regarded as still in force: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."* We are not to encourage an intercourse of a voluntary kind with them, nor place ourselves under their influence: for that influence must be considered as antichristian in proportion as such persons have deviated from the fundamental doctrines which are taught in christianity.

5. They whose moral principles are loose, with respect to the great obligations of justice and equity, who indulge themselves in dishonourable practices, who propagate loose and licentious maxims with regard to the mode of conducting business, who acknowledge themselves to be ready to take any advantages, and are restrained by no other consideration than the penalty of the law, who are ready to sacrifice principle and conscience to filthy lucre, must be considered as a source of evil communication, against which we are here expressly warned.

II. But I proceed, in the next place, briefly to point out the way in which "evil communication" operates in corrupting "good manners."

* 2 John, ver. 9, 10.

You know very well, my brethren, that the order of the natural world is maintained by the operation of matter upon matter; and that the order of the moral world is maintained by the action of mind upon mind. As the great revolutions of nature are carried on by the reciprocal action of the various parts of which the visible universe consists, upon each other, whether of smaller portions or of greater masses; so that mysterious order which the Divine Being maintains in the moral world is upheld and preserved by the mutual action of one mind upon another. This action is incessantly going on; and though it borrows for its instrumentality the organs of the body, yet the ultimate object is mind. The great medium through which this is maintained is the intercourse and conversation of man with man, which brings one mind into contact with another, and is perpetually modifying the mind which is thus drawn into union, and derives modification from that mind with which it converses. We are continually drawing and being drawn, impelling and resisting or yielding, assimilating ourselves to others and others to ourselves; nor is it possible to go into any company and come from it exactly in the same state of mind. The moral modification is perpetually going on; and, if we trace it exactly, we shall find that it is either evil or good; very seldom, if ever, entirely indifferent or neutral. It is one of the fundamental laws of nature, that our minds should be subject to perpetual modification from the minds of others; nor is it within the reach of our will to determine whether this influence shall be exercised or not. Yet we may determine to what influence we subject it; we may determine what society we will keep, but not what influence that society which we choose shall have upon us. It operates according to certain fixed and infallible laws, so that no person can, by any pretence of self-control, justify exposing himself to the action of a power, the operation of which is determined by laws quite independent of himself.

One of the first feelings of every person who goes into company is, to please and be pleased. If he be a per-

son of a benevolent and social spirit, he goes with the very design of assimilating his mind, as much as possible, to the minds of those with whom he converses. This is a silent compact, without which pleasure can neither be imparted nor received. Just in proportion to the delicacy and force of this sympathy, is the pleasure derived from society; and they possess it in the most intense and vivid degree who can most imperceptibly slide into the feelings of others, so as to incorporate for a time their sentiments, feelings, and dispositions with their own. Hence we plainly perceive that there is a preparation in the very nature of society, that society especially which is chosen and of a voluntary nature, for an assimilation of our minds to the views and principles, sentiments and dispositions, of those with whom we converse.

We not only go into society unarmed, but we go with a preparation in favour of the action of the sentiments and the agency of the minds of others which is then operating upon us. We go with the intention of being pleased with the sympathies which that intercourse excites, and lay our hearts and minds, as we experience or expect social pleasure, open as much as possible to the full and entire action of the social instinct. Let us suppose then, at least, that the society into which we enter is not positively vicious, in any other sense than as it is distinguished by a total absence of religion; let the persons with whom we associate be only characterized by an entire neglect of God, an absence of the fear of the Almighty; let their general conduct and deportment be such, and such only, as might be supposed to take place if the verities of religion were exploded, and the expectation of a future account entirely dismissed: it is not too much to say that this society itself will possess a very pernicious influence over any mind. It is dangerous to be accustomed to the absence of religion, and to be familiarized to the contemplation of the most solemn and important subjects in a state of disunion from God, and non-advertence to the prospect of eternity.

For a person, especially a young person, to be accustomed to hear life and death, judgement and eternity, and all the most serious and awful scenes or results of human existence spoken of, I will not say with unbecoming levity, but without advertence to religion, regarding only physical causes and effects, is a dangerous process, and must be attended with the most serious peril. Next to the infusion of positive piety, the most evil element in which the mind can be placed, is that out of which religion is expelled. To live "without God in the world," and to converse with those who thus live, is, only in a lower degree than positive impiety, less dangerous to a creature who is in a state of probation, and whose everlasting interest depends on acquaintance with and obedience to his Maker.

I recollect, some years ago, that upon reading some very popular tales (Moral Tales they are styled), the talent of which is exceedingly great, but which are distinguished by the total absence of religion, and the want of all reference to it even in the scenes of death; the influence on my mind was such that, during the time devoted to that reading, it was with great difficulty and perplexity I was able to discharge my ministerial duties. It became, therefore, painfully evident to me, that to be conversant long together with trains of thought or associations of ideas from which religion is entirely excluded is of most dangerous tendency; for religion is a positive thing, and at the same time, it requires to be brought into view: it must be realized by an effort of the mind; it addresses not itself to the senses, does not occur naturally in the paths of life; it lies in an invisible state, and can only be realized by a positive act of faith, and be made operative by a serious exertion of the mental faculties, by calling our attention to spiritual impressions and thereby overpowering the mechanical and necessary operations of sensible objects.

In the next place, suppose the society into which we enter be vicious in the sense before adverted to; that it be impure society, distinguished by the prevalence of indelicate jests and lascivious associations; such communications, it is unnecessary to say, *must* corrupt good

manners. Must not the primary effect be, at least, gradually to enure the mind to the contemplation of vicious objects, without horror and disgust? Are you not aware that familiarity tends to weaken all impressions? As the mind is passive in receiving them, there is nothing so disgusting at the first view but it may be rendered indifferent, or even an object of complacency. Vicious objects, though they revolt a pure and chaste mind, though every well disciplined spirit turns aside from them with strong disrelish, yet they have such an alliance with the corrupt propensities of our nature, which always remain with us (for even the best are but partially sanctified), that the effect of bringing such objects frequently before the mind must be to subdue the antipathy, to wear off the impression of disgust, and soften the features of deformity; to teach us to contemplate such objects with indifference, till at length we shall certainly come to regard them with a greater or less degree of complacency. The horror of vice gradually subsides, till, before men are aware, they find themselves affected with the most impure conversation very differently from what they were at first. The chastity of the mind is violated; they have lost that instinctive recoil of disgust which such objects naturally inspire, and are become capable of partaking of them with the guilty zest, with which their association with the corrupt tendencies of our nature is too apt to invest them. This is a process perpetually going on. There are persons perpetually receiving the contamination of impurity by this channel. If, then, you meet with persons of this description, who delight to communicate the taint of impurity, and seek to draw down the minds of others to that gross element of sensuality in which they themselves are grovelling, "avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them and pass away;" recollect that such conversation is most essentially evil, and will, before you are aware, corrupt your "good manners."

Suppose, in the next place, that the society into which we enter be of an impious nature, distinguished by a rejection of christianity, or of its great and leading

doctrines, and has in it, consequently, the contagion of impiety; such communication cannot fail, in the strongest degree, to "corrupt good manners." To hear objections against christianity continually repeated, without being answered, to hear the cause of Christ attacked in every possible form, without being in a situation, in a becoming manner, to undertake its defence, must have an injurious tendency. Conversation, if we intend to please and be pleased, should never be a scene of continual dispute; we must either relinquish such society or hold our peace. That person who feels himself called upon on every occasion to defend his religion, will grow weary of contention, and seek repose in another kind of society. Or, if he continues in it, he will ere long learn to be silent; silence will lead to acquiescence, and, finally, he will adjust his opinions to the standard of those with whom he associates. Every man makes the esteem of his companions a good and leading object. When a person, therefore, from that motive, learns to suppress his convictions, he will easily pass from thence to that guilty shame of Jesus Christ before men, which is one of the most baneful elements of corruption and degeneracy. It is dangerous to be in that society where all is against christianity and nothing in its favour; where it is perpetually assailed in a variety of forms, and nothing said in a serious argumentative manner to sustain its interests and vindicate its sanctity. If any man supposes that he has strength of mind to continue in such society, without having the foundations of his confidence in the truths of christianity weakened, that man is entirely unacquainted with his own heart. You may feel conscious of no change of opinion, you may relinquish no article of faith, but the practical assent of the mind is capable of all sorts of varieties possible; the degree of conviction, the strength of that hold which religious principle has upon you, may be weakened in a most essential manner, before you have altered the speculative articles of your belief. The speculative belief in the great truths of christianity is, in pious minds, continually changing itself into practical belief, producing that sense of the reality of eternal

things which justifies the definition given of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Infidel society has the effect of weakening that practical conviction, of estranging the mind from the evidences of divine truth and bringing it into a state of obscurity: it is an element of darkness, and no person can preserve, within its sphere, a permanent and abiding conviction of such truths as are only seen by the eye of faith, and are best realized in the calmness of the sanctuary, and the solitude of the closet. Besides, we shall always find that those who have rejected the yoke of christianity, are anxious to propagate their disbelief; they have not the tranquillity of innocence, the confidence of truth; and they feel themselves strongly fortified, secure, and fearless, in proportion as they have swelled their confederacy, extinguished the conviction, and put out that light of faith in others, which is a condemning light to them, and holds out to them a fearful misgiving in the prospect of eternity. Those who are determined to bid farewell to christianity, have not done it in consequence of a serious process of conviction, but in consequence of consulting their passions, not their reason, determining to gratify their appetites, without restraint or control, and indulging in the pleasures and honours of this world without check. Conscious of this in a greater or less degree they fear that the foundation they are resting upon may prove insecure; they wish, therefore, to be strengthened by the cooperation of others, and feel a guilty satisfaction in proportion as they multiply disciples among their associates, and are thus enabled to hear an echo in every voice, and see the reflection of infidelity in every breast. Is it not extraordinary that men who can only boast that they have discovered that man is nothing,—that this world is the whole of his existence,—that his destiny is withered, and shrunk to the shortest possible compass,—is it not extraordinary that they cannot, at least be silent; that they should be desirous to propagate a discovery so full of shame and reproach? The reason is, that they have fears on the side of religion, though they have not its hopes; they

dread the truth of it, having given up all prospect of benefit from it, having relinquished all part in its consolations; therefore they feel their fears allayed, preturbation subside, in proportion as they swell their numbers by an extensive confederation. They are "deceiving and deceived."

Let me earnestly impress it on every one who wishes to be saved; (and if you do not, why approach the sanctuary of God, why hear the words of this book, why lift up a prayer to the throne of heaven in the name of the Great Redeemer?) if you wish to be saved, go not into such society, or, if you enter it unawares, remain not in it. To choose such persons as confidants of your hours of affectionate and social intercourse, is to live in an element of contagion; it is to go into a pest-house; it is to take up your abode in the midst of the most virulent and destructive disease. "Evil communications" will "corrupt good manners." No experience of our own,—no extent of observation can serve to invalidate or impair the truth of this maxim, which is confirmed by the experience of all ages.

III. But I proceed, in the third place, briefly to explain the warning here given, and to enforce the caution which is strongly implied in the words "Be not deceived." There are many sources of self-deception; let me, therefore, warn every one not to be deceived.

1. In the first place, be not deceived by the adduction of false precedents. It may be suggested, that our Lord was pleased to mingle indiscriminately with all classes and descriptions of persons; but do not imagine that it would, on that account, be safe for *you* to imitate this part of his conduct. Recollect the infinite disparity of his situation and character, and yours. He came into a world of contagion, but it was to impart the medicine of life; he came to a great infirmary, but he was himself the physician of souls; he "came to save sinners," but was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."* When Satan himself came, he found nothing in him. Does it follow that we, who are placed at so

* Heb. vii. 26.

infinite a distance beneath him, should be safe in such contagion? "Be not deceived;" do not take a partial view of our Saviour's character; do not consider one portion of it only—his exposure to moral danger,—while you forget his sanctity, his watchfulness, his care over his own conduct, his self-government, and the constant use of those rules of prudence and piety which are recommended by other parts of his example. If you can find an infallible way to overcome temptation, and achieve the victory over the enemies of your salvation, you may then plead the precedent of our Lord's example against the genius of his religion and the import of his precepts. It was impossible that his spotless character should be contaminated. Can *we* plead that exemption and impossibility?

2. Be not deceived by your past experience. You may be ready to say, that you have been frequently exposed to vicious society,—you may be living in it now, and perceive none of those evils, discern none of that degeneracy and corruption to which we have adverted; and you appear to pass through it with impunity; "Be not deceived;" you are very ill judges, it may be, of the state of your own minds; you may imagine that you have received no injury because you have fallen into no great crime, have violated none of the more essential laws of social morality; but, if you look within, you may perceive a preparation for the commission of these, in the weakening of that conscience which preserves you in the fear of God, in the decay and eclipse of the spirit of faith, in the relaxed hold of the great prospects of eternity which you had before. What has been the effect of such society on your private devotions? Has it carried you to your closet? Has it prepared you to retire for communion with God? Has it endeared to you the Scriptures, or estranged you from them? Has it made the transition easy, to the duties of private and solitary piety? Did you find such society calculated to make it more difficult, or more easy, for you to enter into the true spirit of religion; and to practise those duties, without which all the devotions of the

sanctuary will be only "walking in a vain show," and seeking the applause of man, instead of the approbation of Him who "seeth in secret."

3. Do not be deceived by any complacent reference to the time of life at which you have arrived, or the progress in religion which you have already made. Though the influence of evil society upon the young is of the most corrupting tendency; though their minds, in the period when the character is formed, are most subject to its hurtful influence; yet, the danger of "evil communications" is by no means confined to them. No: at whatever period of life you have arrived, "evil communications" *will* "corrupt good manners." Habits are lost in the same way as they are acquired; the fruits of long custom in right action are speedily dissipated and destroyed by exposure to contrary custom in doing wrong; and the mind of no person has arrived at such a state of confirmation in holy habits as to make a relaxation of vigilance safe, or enable it to yield itself up securely to the casual influence of place and society. Religion is a perpetual warfare; religion is a perpetual exercise of self-command; it is a perpetual reference to the will of God; it is a perpetual use of the power of self-government, and attention to the invisible eye of Him that seeth in secret. If you commit yourself to evil society now, what shall hinder you in the most advanged age from forsaking the law of God, and disgracing the latter part of your life by conduct totally different from that which conferred dignity on your youth? Solomon, in his youth, feared God, but when old age came upon him, through the contagious example of his idolatrous wives, he forsook the God of his fathers, and exposed his kingdom to perdition and ruin. No, my brethren, there is no such thing as depending upon any force of habit, unless its influence produces right conduct at present; if it inspires us with a holy resolution, and gives a right view of our duty at the present moment, and determination to adhere to it, we may rejoice in that habit; but if it produces recumbency, a slothful dependence upon God, and neglect of the precautions of religion and the rules

of duty, we have reason to believe, that he who thus thinketh he standeth, will soon fall.

4. Be not deceived by any supposed strength of resolution with which you may enter into such society. It is much easier abstained from than denounced. The paths of sinners are much more easily shunned than they are quitted. When confederacies are formed it requires a powerful effort to break them. It is far less difficult to keep out of society than to resist its current. The action of fire is mechanical and necessary, you may approach it or not; so you may avoid evil company if you please. The ranks of impiety are not so thin as not to give you sufficient warning to escape them; but when you are in them, in the very focus of temptation, no resolution you can exert, will, for a moment, stop its progress; you must submit to its action; you are committed to your fate and must take the consequences; you must be deteriorated and degenerated with the causes of deterioration and degeneracy. Be not deceived, then, by supposing that any previous resolution has considerable influence on the conduct of men, when they are off their guard and open to the impression of social affections. This is the season, of all others, in which mental resolution has least power; the mind is not only open, but, before it is aware, becomes relaxed; the love of association soon comes to supplant all other thoughts; all the cooler reflections, the wiser resolves of the closet vanish; all the force of the most strenuous intentions melt like wax before the sun, in the warmth of social intercourse. In proportion as the social affections are vivid and warm, in that proportion is the necessary effect in dissipating and giving to the wind the force of the most strenuous resolutions.

Hence permit me to suggest one or two cautions of prudence. In the first place, let those who have a serious sense of religion bind themselves with the vows of God, and enter on a solemn profession of them, at an early period of life. Enter into the church of God, take upon you the vows of the Almighty; if your hearts are sincere towards him, if you have reason to believe

you are in earnest in seeking after him, and have committed yourself to the Redeemer, take upon you his yoke openly, bear his name upon your forehead before men. This will have the happiest effect in strengthening you against the force of evil example. Recollecting the nature of your engagements, you will be awakened to a sense of consistency of conduct, and be shocked at the thought of bringing reproach on the cause of God. A feeling of self-respect will come in aid of the higher principles of religion, and the higher motives to virtuous conduct. You will remember that you have assumed, if I may so say, a peculiar caste; and when you look upon the pure and holy robe of the profession of christianity you thus wear, you will be anxious, if you have been sincere in making that profession, to keep it "unspotted from the world." It is well, in such a state of temptation, to render difficult, if not impossible, indeed, to put yourself on ground from which you cannot retreat. Now, he who has done this effectually, has given up his name to Christ, and enrolled himself among his disciples, has gone forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach, and thus cut off his own retreat; he renders it impossible to consult his earthly interests at the expense of piety, without bringing upon himself all the reproaches of his conscience, the ridicule of unbelievers, and the contempt of his companions and of mankind.

Let all young persons, then, bind themselves with the vows of God, and unite themselves to those whom God has touched by his Spirit, and is guiding, under the convoy of the Captain of Salvation, to eternal glory. The church will willingly receive all such as are desirous of uniting themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and will say, as Moses did to Hobab: "Come with us, and we will do you good; we are going to the land of which the Lord our God hath said, I will give it you."* Are you linked in with society from which you find it difficult to break? Change your place of abode, make a sacrifice of worldly convenience, nay, relinquish

* Numb. x. 29.

some of the tendernesses of life, rather than fail in securing your safety: there is no place so dangerous, none from which you ought to flee with so much rapidity, as that which is the seat of contagion, where, enlinked with vicious associates, you cannot remain without being in the way to perpetuate your confederacy with sinners. Flee from such a place; as you would not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly;" stand not "in the way of sinners," lest you "sit down in the seat of the scorners." Flee, then, as for your life. These, you know, are different stages in depravity, different degrees of progress in corruption; walking "in the counsel of the ungodly" is the first; he who does that will next "stand in the way of sinners," and that is a ready and proper preparation for sitting down "in the seat of the scornful."* Do you wish not to be ashamed of Christ before men? Go into society which shall not tempt you to that shame; seek those associates before whom you may, without a blush, lift up your heads and avow your attachment to a once crucified, but now glorified, Redeemer.

Let it be remembered, that with those with whom you voluntarily associate here, you shall be associated hereafter by the disposer of all things, for ever: with those persons with whom you choose to spend your time, you must spend your eternity; these are inseparably allied. Those who choose the society of the vicious, those who keep company with the enemies of God in this world by choice and election, will have their portions with such in the regions of everlasting darkness. Eternity is pressing on: ask yourselves, then, with whom would you wish to be associated when "the voice of the archangel and the trump of God" shall proclaim that "there shall be time no longer." With whom would you choose to rise? With whom would you have your everlasting portion? With patriarchs and prophets? With evangelists and apostles? With saints and martyrs now shining forth in the glories of celestial radiance? or with those who, having slighted the warnings and despised the mercies of

* Psalm i. 1.

the Lord, must assuredly "awake to shame and everlasting contempt."* There are but two societies in the universe, the church and the world; the servants of God and the servants of Satan; the votaries of time and the votaries of eternity: they are each of them claiming your regard, and saying to ingenuous youth, "Come with us," and holding out their respective allurements and attractions. One presents "the pleasures of sin for a season," to be followed by bitter remorse and everlasting despair; the other the prize of immortality, the society of saints, calm of conscience, quiet of mind, the peace of a self-approving spirit, consolation unutterable, and that only as the earnest of the pleasures to be enjoyed at the right hand of God: that fulness of joy which is for evermore.

Recollect, also, that time is pressing on, and we shall soon be that which we shall continue to be for ever. Do not say, I will remain a little longer in the society of wicked persons, I will loiter a little longer in the pursuit of sin and sensual gratification, in the neglect of God and religion. While you are halting, God may decide for you; he has no sympathy with hesitation, but looks with contempt and abhorrence on the infatuation, and wretched folly and guilt of that mind which prefers the applause of the world, the pleasures of sin, and the gratification of a moment, to the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which accrues from his favour and friendship. He has no sympathy with such persons, he abhors them; at least, they are exercising his patience every day. Despise not, then, "the riches of his goodness and long-suffering," lest, while you are halting between two opinions, God should lift up his hand "and swear that you shall not see his rest." "To-day," then, I say, to-day, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness."†

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, "for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighte-

* Dan. xii. 3. † Psalm xcv. 7, 8.

ousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"* For you are the temple of the living God, if you are Christians; and to be such I trust every one here is aspiring, as He hath said, "I will dwell with them and walk in them, and I will bless them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Therefore, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Most High God."†

XIX.

THE EVILS OF IDOLATRY, AND THE MEANS OF ITS ABOLITION.‡

[PREACHED AT BRISTOL, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONS, NOVEMBER 2, 1826.]

ISAIAH ii. 18—"*The idols He shall utterly abolish.*"

THE progress of Christianity in the world has already been so great and wonderful, as to carry evidence of its divine original, and of its promised final triumph over every false religion. Its vast effects have been produced principally by the simple instrument of preaching its doctrines, attended by the promised influence of the Holy Spirit. The same instrument, attended by the same influence, may be reasonably expected to effect the ultimate conversion of all the nations. This most desirable object we are on the present occasion assembled to promote.

It is agreed by expositors, that, in the connexion of the text, the success of the gospel is predicted:—as a

* 2 Cor. vi 14—16 † 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

‡ Printed from the Notes of the Rev. Thomas Grinfield.

remarkable feature by which its success would be distinguished, the destruction of idolatry is mentioned in the words I have selected; in which two things are proposed to our attention; the evil to be abolished, and the means of its abolition.

I. The evil to be abolished. This, as you will observe, is idolatry. It has been commonly and very properly distinguished, as of two kinds, *literal* and *spiritual*. The latter, or *spiritual* idolatry, is an evil which, by the apostasy of our nature, attaches to all mankind, whether inhabiting christian or pagan regions, except those individuals whose hearts have experienced a renovation by the Spirit of God. It is to the former, or *literal* idolatry, that the prophet refers in the text: this the connexion shows, where mention is made of those *idols of silver and gold*, which the converted idolaters would cast away. The progress of Christianity was, from the first, marked by the cessation of idol worship; and this was effected by the same means which are still to be employed. Men were called to *turn from their dumb idols to serve the living God*. The abandonment of a false worship must prepare the way for a moral revolution: men must cease from the adoration of images, before they can in any sense be worshippers of the true Jehovah.

There are two principal points of view in which we may regard the evil nature and effects of idolatry; its aspect toward God, and its aspect toward man. In the former aspect, it appears as a crime; in the latter, as a calamity: thus contemplated, it appears as an evil destructive equally to the divine glory, and to human happines. Man naturally tends to this evil; and one generation after another gradually accumulated the follies of superstition, till it reached the monstrous extreme of gross idolatry.

1. The word of God everywhere reprobates idolatry as an *abominable thing* which the soul of God abhors. To provide against it, was a principal object in the political and municipal department of the Mosaic law. It is expressly prohibited by the first and the second com-

mandment of the moral law; the first being designed to confirm the worship of the true God; the second, to exclude every idolatrous form of worship. Idolatry makes a material symbol of the invisible God; but so jealous is the Divine Being of his own honour, that he has forbidden, not only the worship of any other or false God, but even the worship of *Himself* by the medium of a graven image. The golden calf was intended as a representative of the God of Israel; and the calves set up by Jeroboam were the same: yet the worship of the golden calf occasioned the slaughter, by the divine command, of three thousand persons; and the executioners of divine vengeance were extolled for having forgotten the feelings of nature toward their nearest kindred: every man was commanded to slay his brother or his son, and so to consecrate himself to the Lord.* Where the honour of God was so deeply concerned, men were to lose sight of common humanity. When the Israelites were tempted by the artifices of Balaam to commit idolatry at Baal Peor, twenty-four thousand were slain at once; the memory of Phinehas was immortalized on account of the holy zeal he displayed in the destruction of certain conspicuous offenders; and the Moabites were devoted to extermination, because, in this respect, they had proved a snare to Israel. According to the divine appointment, credit was to be denied to the testimony of an idolater, and his life was to be taken by his nearest relative. All this marks the disposition, with regard to idolatry, of that Being, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* If he does not now punish it as he once did, it is not that he hates it now less than formerly: but he spares men, that they may be brought to the knowledge of his will and his salvation: *Now he commands all men every where to repent, because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ:* and he desires that we, who have received the gospel, should carry the tidings of this command to all mankind.

* Exod. xxxii. 29.

Idolatry is, with respect to the government of God, what treason or rebellion is with respect to civil government. It is the setting up of an idol in the place of the Supreme Power: an affront offered to that Majesty, in which all order and authority is combined and concentered, and which is the fountain of all social blessings. Hence, in the eye of God, nothing can dilute the turpitude, or diminish the guilt of this offence. It makes no difference what may be the character of the rival: there is still an entire transfer of allegiance from *the blessed and only Potentate*, to a palpable usurper; and the guilt remains the same. Were the idol cast in a mould of the purest moral beauty, it would still, as an idol, be a monster deserving universal execration. Were we even to suppose the character of the idol immaculate as that of Jesus Christ and God himself, the case would not be materially altered; an invasion would still be committed on the immense empire of the Most High.

Idolatry is an evil which, where it exists, taints every apparent virtue; because it destroys the soul of duty, which is obedience to the divine will, conformity to the divine command. Though there exists an eternal rectitude, independent of written revelation; yet we short-sighted creatures must resign ourselves to be guided by the *revealed* will of God; conformity to this is our only sure standard. And the Scriptures everywhere assure us, that nothing is acceptable to God that is not done under the influence of a sincere regard to his will. This is perfectly reasonable. Suppose a person to do accidentally, unintentionally, just what you would wish to have done; yet, if, in so doing, he had no design to please you, will his conduct satisfy you in the same manner as if he had acted from a regard to your wish, as your devoted servant? Your will, your authority, never entered into his views and motives; and can he expect that you should reward him? Thus nothing is done rightly, to any good purpose, where God is not regarded: the *single eye* is wanting; and, *that* wanting, *the whole body is full of darkness.* Men may do much

good from merely self-interested or ambitious motives, and they may *have their reward*, the only reward they ever sought, in success and applause. Nebuchadnezzar was employed by God as a rod to scourge his guilty people; and, having served that purpose, was cast aside. Pagan philosophers and heroes have exercised the virtues of temperance and moderation, without the least advertence to the Divine will; and hence, as Augustine remarks, their virtues can only be regarded as *splendid sins*. "God was not in all their thoughts;" God was as much forgotten in their virtues as he was in their vices; they remained as dead in sin, because as dead to God, as ever. They sought to be admired and idolized, in a world they were so soon to quit, by creatures whose applause was of no value; and they were as destitute of spiritual vitality as the most profligate of their fellow-mortals! Just as, amidst the awful solemnities of the last day, we may imagine the impassioned admirer of nature or art beholding with regret so many fair objects and heart-ravishing scenes, in which he once delighted, all alike consigned to the final conflagration; even so the christian may be supposed, on that occasion, touched with a momentary pang, to see many who here excited his admiration, many who perhaps obtained his esteem, and awakened his tenderest sympathies, yet numbered at last with them that are *lost!*—although he must then be satisfied, in a degree inconceivable at present, of the justice of their condemnation; inasmuch as (whatever they might have been besides) they were dead to God; "they worshipped the creature more than the Creator;" they were, in the essence of character, idolaters.

With respect to the *origin* of idolatry, it is probable that men began by raising images to the memory of departed heroes, and afterwards transferred their homage to the images themselves; until they gradually descended to the worship of the meanest objects, even those which are the most obscene and unutterable. There is nothing so vile, filthy, disgusting, or horrible, that has not, by some nation, been selected as an object of worship. Happily we, my brethren, are situated so remote, both

in time and place, from the principal of these abominations, that we are able to form only a very inadequate idea of the enormous folly to which they have proceeded.

2. But we turn to contemplate idolatry on another side; in its aspect toward man, its influence on society.

The apostle Paul informs us, that God hath shown to men what may be known concerning himself; that his invisible being, his eternal power and godhead, may be clearly seen and understood by the works of creation; so that "those are *without excuse* who have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image in the likeness of corruptible man, of birds, and beasts, and reptiles."* They are *without excuse*; their conduct admits of no apology: *wherefore*, as the apostle adds, *God gave them up to a reprobate*, a base, and undiscerning *mind*; and, *as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them up to their own vile affections*, and left them to violate even the laws of nature.

The origin of all the atrocities they committed is to be found in aversion to God; dislike of the spirituality and purity of his character, a desire, like Cain, to retire from the presence of their Maker; a wish to forget a Being whose character they knew to be utterly uncongenial with their own. This disposition originally led men to substitute idols for God. Those idols would, of course, be conceived of a character unlike that of God. Men would never form their imaginary deities after the model of him whom they disliked: accordingly, they receded to the utmost possible distance from all resemblance to the holy, omniscient, glorious God of Abraham and of Israel. Impure themselves, they were not disposed to adopt a God of purity: full of malignant passions they could form no conception of a God of love—a Father pouring out his blessed fulness, and delighting in beneficence to his vast family. No, my brethren, their gods were of a different description; vindictive tyrants, divided, like themselves, by eternal factions and conten-

* Rom. i. 19—25.

tions; each pursuing his favourite objects and patronizing his adopted party.

Homer, the first who appears to have composed a regular picture of idolatry, paints his Jupiter, or supreme deity, as deficient in every divine attribute; in omnipotence, in justice, and even in domestic peace. He paints Juno as the victim of eternal jealousy; and with good reason for her jealousy, when the earth was peopled, according to Homer, with the illegitimate progeny of Jupiter, to whom almost every hero traced his pedigree. Mars was the personification of rage and violence; Mercury, the patron of artifice and theft. How far such a mythology influenced the character of its votaries, it is perhaps impossible for us to know: nothing could be more curious than to look into the mind of a heathen. But it is certain that the mind must have been exceedingly corrupted by the influence of such a creed: and probably each individual idolater would be influenced by the deity whose character happened to be most accommodated to his own peculiar passions. Achilles would emulate Mars in ferocity and deeds of blood: Ulysses would be like Mercury in craft and stratagem: while the ambitious mind of Alexander or Julius Cæsar would aspire to act a Jupiter on earth. What a state of society must that be, in which no vice, no crime could be perpetrated that was not sanctioned by the very objects of religious worship! What a religion *that* which exerted an antagonist force against conscience itself!—a religion which silenced or perverted the dictates of the moral sense, *the thoughts that should either accuse or excuse us* within! The temples of Venus, we are informed, were crowded by a thousand prostitutes, as servants and representatives of that licentious goddess; the very places of their worship were the scenes of their vices, and seemed as if they were designed to consecrate the worst part of their conduct!

In modern India, idolatry is exemplified on a scale scarcely less extensive; and everywhere it is marked by two leading qualities, *cruelty* and *impurity*. The Hindoo deities are of a ferocious and sanguinary character, and are supposed to drink out of the skulls of their victims. The more we become acquainted with these idolaters, like Ezekiel, when he surveyed the *chambers of imagery*, we discover only the *greater abominations*. In their system, as connected with their conduct, there is a perpetual action and re-action; vice generating idols, and idols fortifying vice. First, we find mere abstractions of the mind formed concerning the Deity; these are next embodied in idols; and all the human passions are enlisted by devotion itself on the side of vice. *Here*, in a country influenced by the light of revelation, we are accustomed in all our ideas to associate religion and morality: we never suppose a truly religious man can be any other than a good moralist; when we see a person who fears God, and refers even his thoughts to conscience, we never doubt that his practice is correct; his word is as an oath to us; because the standard he adopts is the Divine will, and he is himself a faint image and adumbration of the moral glory of God. But the fire of piety, instead of kindling, would only quench the fire of idolatry. A man must be unfitted for that worship, in exact proportion to his fear and love of God. The image of Satan must displace the image of God, in the heart of every idolater.

II. Hitherto we have attended to a melancholy subject, and have seen only the nakedness and degradation of our race. We must now more briefly advert to a brighter scene, presented by the prophet, when he assures us that Jesus Christ (of whom he is speaking) will utterly abolish idolatry, and sweep it from the face of the earth with the "besom of destruction;" not a worshipper of idols shall be left at last, but His wrath shall consume that man. In sending the gospel to the heathen, you offer, as it were, the holy incense, like Moses, when he interposed between God and the perishing Israelites: you stand, like him, *between the dead and the living*,—the dead and the living for eternity!—and you *stay the plague!*

No sooner did christianity appear, than its formidable

power, as the opponent of idolatry, was felt and manifested. Pliny,* writing about seventy years after the death of Christ, declared to the Emperor Trajan, that, in the province of Bithynia, where he presided as proconsul, the temples were nearly deserted: a striking proof how rapidly the system of paganism gave way before the sword of the Spirit wielded by the primitive missionaries. One unhappy exception, indeed, still remains, in the idolatrous worship of the Romish church; but the triumphs of the gospel are advancing, and as we have lately seen the islands of the South Sea casting away their ancient idols *to the moles and to the bats*, so shall every system of idolatry and false worship be utterly, and for ever, overthrown.

Preaching, an instrument so unpromising in the view of carnal reason, has been the chief instrument employed in producing these moral revolutions. *When, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God;* when the only Being against whom all conspired, was the Maker of all, and men proved themselves to be blind at noonday; *it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Nothing but this can save them: woe be to that man who teaches that there is any proclamation of salvation that includes not the preaching Jesus Christ. This is the instrument which God has crowned with success. Before the rising Sun of Righteousness, idolatry melted away, as wax before the fire; and effects, the reverse of those produced by that baneful system will always attend the beneficent progress of the gospel. Cruelty and impurity disappear in holiness and brotherly love. Christianity, instead of severing the ties of nature, harmonizes and unites the most distant from each other, as brethren; according to the design of our Saviour, *that he should gather together in one the children of God, that were scattered abroad;* while those, who before were stained with every vice, are purified in their hearts and conduct by the influence of heavenly truth.

* See the note at page 331 of this volume.

In proportion, my brethren, as you value the blessings of religion, you will wish that others should partake them with yourselves: in proportion as you are disposed to pray, *Lord, evermore give us this bread;* you will desire to communicate it to all beside. You will love your brethren, as you love your Saviour, *not having seen* either: if you have been divinely taught, this will be your feeling in regard to all mankind. That man's heart is not right with God, who can look, unmoved, upon the vast heathen world, lying *dead in trespasses and sins;* dead by a moral, a voluntary death, such as cannot be pleaded in arrest of the divine judgement. But, though they have destroyed themselves, in God is their help; he "has laid help on one that is mighty," "to save even to the uttermost" The Father has appointed his beloved Son to be the dispenser of all spiritual blessings, as Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the dispenser of bread to the perishing Egyptians; and as Pharaoh answered every application by saying, Go to Joseph; the Father says to sinners, Go to Jesus Christ with all your wants; no man can come to the Father but by him. He is the ark in which all the hopes, all the treasures, of human nature are deposited, in him is all the fulness of God.

A cause so great and sacred as that of christianity absorbs all those differences and divisions, of a minor kind, that exist among us: and I trust and believe there is not a missionary of our own Baptist communion, who would not infinitely prefer the conversion and salvation of one soul, to making the whole heathen world adopt our views of a disputed and comparatively inconsiderable ceremony. If there is such a man, I am no party to his sentiment; there exists no communion between us; let not my soul enter into that man's secret! No, my dear brethren! we, I trust, have far higher views; the only kind of proselytes we desire to make are proselytes to God and Jesus Christ! In the promotion of such a cause, we are ready to forget our own denomination, and to co-operate with every other; we feel that with such an object proposed, were *we* to sit still, the very stones in our streets would cry out, and almost rise

up into bibles and missionaries! Contribute, brethren, to the support and extension of this sacred enterprise, and you will convert uncertain riches into the means of bestowing *the true riches*,—of diffusing *the unsearchable riches of Christ;* your contributions will become, in the hand of God, bibles, instructions, prayers, sermons; the messengers of saving mercy to many immortal souls.

XX.

CHRIST'S MISSION FOR THE ADOPTION OF SONS IN THE FULNESS OF TIME.*

[PREACHED AT MELBOURNE, NEAR ROYSTON, SEPTEMBER 1827.]

GAL. iv. 4, 5.—"*But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"

THE Galatians, among whom Paul had taught the religion of Christ, were soon led astray as to some of its most essential and important doctrines, by the arts of Judaizing teachers.

They admitted and inculcated the obligation of circumcision and other ceremonies of the ancient law, maintaining that without these men could not be saved; thereby vacating and superseding the sacrifice of Christ, and denying the sufficiency of his mediation and death for the salvation of sinful men. Of these Paul testified that, if any man submitted to circumcision on this ground, with a view to procure acceptance with God, or as any ingredient of justification in his sight, for such a person Christ had died in vain. He subverts the only foundation laid in Zion, by mixing those observations of the law of Moses, which were typical of Christ and his kingdom, with his satisfaction, as the ground of acceptance with the just and holy God.

* Printed from the Notes of the Hon. Baron Gurney.

In order to recall the Galatians from these errors, he directs their attention in the words just read, to the great and fundamental doctrine of Christ's incarnation and atonement, to its completeness and efficacy, not only in saving us from guilt and condemnation, but in reinstating us in the divine favour, and bestowing on us inexpressible privileges; admission into his family and the reception of that spirit of adoption which is the spirit of his Son, whereby Christians feel the dispositions and perform the duties of obedient children to their heavenly Father. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father."

In these words there are three things that demand our attention;

I. The mission of Jesus Christ, and the manner in which he manifested himself.

II. The design of his mission; "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

III. The fitness of that season which God, in his infinite wisdom, appointed for this purpose; it was in "the fulness of time."

1. In the first place, these words present to our attention the great fact of Christ's mission from the Father, and his appearance in our world. Of the dignity of the person of our Saviour, as denoted by the expression, "God sent forth his Son," we have sufficient notice in various parts of the New Testament.

The character of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is placed in contrast with the dignity of angelic intelligences, and is asserted in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the bright-

ness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than they, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." To denote the inexpressible dignity of Jesus Christ, as being one with the Father in his most essential prerogatives and perfections, he is here styled "his Son." The Father gave him birth; he came into the world having existed before it; "he came unto his own, and his own received him not;" even He, that Word which "was with God and was God," and without whom "was not any thing made that was made," He, the Eternal Word and Son of God, "became flesh; that is, assumed our nature, "and dwelt among us." His goings forth were from everlasting, and his manifestations among the ancient tribes of Israel not unfrequent. We have reason to believe that those symbolical appearances of God, by which the patriarchs and Moses and the prophets communed with the Most High, were anticipated representations and appearances of Christ. But they were occasional and transient, and in them he wore "the form of God;" but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son to take up his abode with human nature, to tabernacle among us.

The manner in which this manifestation was made, and the leading circumstances attending it, are marked out in this passage, "he was made of a woman," and "made under the law." Every one must be aware of the peculiarity of the phrase, *made of a woman*, and will

no doubt infer from it something peculiar in the circumstances of our Saviour's birth. Accordingly, we find the sacred writers distinctly inform us of the miraculous production of our Lord by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus the angel saluted the blessed virgin, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In every possible sense Jesus Christ possesses this character. In his pre-existent state he was the Word and the Son of God; in his human nature he bore that relation as being the immediate production of the Almighty; as it is also said of Adam in the genealogy given by St. Luke that *he* was the Son of God.

This particular of our Saviour's existence, as being miraculously conceived by the Holy Ghost, is frequently noticed in the Old and New Testament, and no doubt possesses great importance in the plan of redemption. Thus, when the first transgression entered into the world by the subtlety of Satan, God pronounced this curse upon that apostate spirit who presented himself under the semblance and form of a serpent, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." No satisfactory account can be given of Jesus Christ, who is here plainly prophesied of as the seed of the woman, but in the circumstance alluded to in the passage before us; that is his miraculous conception, in relation to which he was emphatically and peculiarly made of a woman, standing in a more immediate connexion with that sex than the other. When God was pleased to afford a remarkable and illustrious promise of the appearance of his Son, it was combined with the mention of this particular, "the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," which is interpreted by the evangelist Matthew, "God

with us." Again, St. Luke says, "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph;" plainly intimating that he was not so, but was in reality the immediate production of a divine power.

In the second chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, notice is taken of the circumstances attending the entrance of sin in the first transgression. When inculcating the duty of silence and submission on the part of the women, and particularly in the church of Christ, he says, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved *in* childbearing" (as we have it; but it is improperly rendered, and should be, *by* child-bearing) "if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety." There is no reason to doubt that the true meaning is *by the child-bearing*, referring not to the pains of parturition, but to the extraordinary event of the birth of our Saviour in a miraculous manner. She shall be saved, notwithstanding she was the means of human ruin by admitting the solicitations of Satan, if she continue in the exercise of christian virtue, and is herself a faithful servant of the Lord God; she shall be saved by the child-bearing, by that signal and miraculous child-bearing which took place in the birth of the Messiah. The apostle is not adverting to any temporal circumstance; he is speaking of the entrance of sin by means of the woman, and it is natural to throw in a compensatory circumstance, reminding us, that as the inferior sex had been the source of human perversion, so it had the honour of being the immediate instrument of the production of the Messiah, by whom our recovery was effected. And the condition which follows, "if they continue in faith and charity, and holiness with sobriety," puts this interpretation beyond doubt; as there is the greatest connexion between faith and virtue, without which our faith is vain, but none whatever between perseverance in holiness and exemption from the pains of child-birth.

The circumstances of our Saviour's incarnation placed

him at an immeasurable distance from all the other parts of the human race. He was the immediate production of God; by his divine power he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and thereby completely exempted from the taint of original sin, which attaches to all the posterity of Adam. He was the holy thing born of a virgin. He was by constitution placed in the same state as our first parents; he underwent a similar but severer trial, and continued to maintain his innocence against all the assaults of Satan, overcoming his stratagems by his wisdom and sanctity, and his violence by his powers of endurance.

In the next place it is said, he was "made under the law." The term *made* here plainly implies that he was put into a situation different from that which was originally natural to him. Such an expression could not with propriety be used respecting any one who was, by the constitution of his nature and at every period, subject to the law. It is best illustrated, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," by the striking passage in the epistle to the Philippians, where St. Paul is inculcating the duty of condescension and lowliness among christians: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation" (or emptied himself, divested himself of that glory which he had before all worlds), "and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here we see Christ is set forth as the greatest example of condescension, in that, though he bore the form of God, yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. These particulars could not have evinced any humility in our Saviour, on the supposition of his having no previous existence, nor a nature higher than human. No person was ever praised for humility in that respect, that he was found in fashion as a man, or appeared as the servant of the Most High: these are the necessary

appendages of his condition and existence, quite foreign from his will, and cannot for a moment enter into the consideration of that part of his moral character which respects lowliness of mind. But if we believe, as the Scriptures tell us, that Jesus Christ *was* "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," that he "*was* with God and was God," nothing can set forth his condescension in a more striking point of view than his taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Then, indeed, there was room for choice and election respecting his appearance in our world, and that event must have been the effect of his own purpose and the object of his entire complacency. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

The necessary condition of every *creature*, however exalted, is that of submission to the law of God. The obligation of obeying his precepts and of sustaining his penalties in case of the violation of them is inherent, we have the strongest reason to believe, in every finite nature. We cannot dismiss from our minds the connexion between being produced by the Divine Being and being subjected to his law. But here we have presented to us a new and extraordinary spectacle,—that of a person in our nature, who has taken upon him that nature by appearing in the form of man, and thereby *become* subject to the law of God. *He* was "*made* under the law;" whereas all other creatures *are* under it by the very terms of their existence, by the very condition of their nature. He was *made under the law* as really as he was *made of a woman.*

Our Lord was made under the law in every sense. Divines have generally considered that Jesus Christ was made under three laws, or under the law considered in three points of view. First, he was made under the *ceremonial* law, and subject to all its rights and ceremonies. He frequented the synagogue and the temple; he was circumcised the eighth day, and dedicated to the

Lord in the usual manner; he was observant in paying the dues of the temple. That homage, from which he was exempt as the Son of God, he submitted to observe, lest the Jews should take offence. In no part of his conduct do we find any accusation from his bitterest enemies of violating the law, except in the single particular of his working miracles on the Sabbath-day, which he justified by showing that "man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man," and that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day." In every other respect he was observant of the law to the very letter, and well might he say to his most inveterate foes, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

He was made, also, under the *moral* law, and was observant of all its unchangeable duties. In all his conduct to his Heavenly Father, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself, he was an example of perfect piety, benevolence, and purity. There was, in the whole of his deportment that which spoke him to be the "Lamb of God," holy, without blemish and without spot. "Such an High-priest became us," was suited to our circumstances, and alone equal to our exigence and danger, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In him alone was exhibited a perfect pattern of obedience to the law of God, and thereby he was prepared, in part at least, to be an oblation for the sins of men. Unless he had been a *spotless*, he could not have been an *acceptable* sacrifice; but as his human nature rendered him an appropriate victim, so also his immaculate purity made him fit in respect of moral quality to be offered up as an expiation to divine justice.

But, besides this, he was made under the *mediatorial* law, a law more rigid and awful than any other. For, standing in the stead of sinners, representing their persons, and being exposed to the penalties of a broken law, he endured the wrath of God which was kindled against us, submitted to that death which was denounced against our transgressions, and by "death destroyed death." He came into the world under the necessity of suffering; he came into it principally for the purpose of

dying; death was the end of his life, the very design of his being. He came not to reign, but to obey; not to rejoice, but to sorrow; not to live a life of ease and comfort, of dignity and splendour, but of poverty, self-denial, and reproach; and then to expire in agony upon the cross. This was the very object of his appearance in our world, and of this he never lost sight for a moment, amidst the highest efforts of miraculous exertion and the loudest applauses of an admiring multitude. "I have a baptism," he says, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

II. Let us observe, in the second place, with what view Jesus Christ was thus "made of a woman," and "made under the law." It was to "redeem them that were under the law, that we may receive the adoption of sons." If we believe that Jesus Christ was that glorious personage who was with the Father before all worlds, that he was his true and proper Son, essentially partaking with him in the perfections of Deity, we shall not admit that he came into the world to accomplish a purpose which could be effected by other means or by an inferior agent. We shall be inclined to assign to him some signal achievement to which the properties of his nature, and the elevation of his rank, were alone equal. Whatever end could have been accomplished by an inferior person we shall not suppose to be the only design of the incarnation of Christ. For He who doeth nothing in vain, and wasteth no power in carrying his purposes into effect, He who is frugal in the economy of creation, who is frugal in the economy of his providence, would not lavish a superfluity of greatness and glory upon the work of our salvation. If the ends to be attained could have been attained by any inferior instrumentality, those instruments would have been employed. If the Saviour came into the world for no other purpose than that of teaching a true doctrine, it is plain that this could have been done by the agency of men alone. It was done by Moses, who rivetted the attachment of the people, from generation to generation, to a burdensome and painful ritual; the prophets sufficiently attested their mission

from Heaven, and were regarded, by all the pious and thinking part of the Jewish nation, with the profoundest deference. If our Saviour, therefore, came into the world to reveal a fact, such as a future life, and exemplify it in his own person, nothing more was necessary than that he should be a human being. Those, however, who believe that Jesus Christ possessed a higher nature, that he was the Son of God, a divine person, will admit, of course, that the end of his manifestation could not have been effected at less cost.

This leads us to consider him as the Redeemer. He came not merely to exemplify a rule of life, but to satisfy its violation; he came, not to explain the statutes of heaven, but to pay the penalty arising from the curse denounced against their transgression. He came essentially to change the moral situation of mankind, to roll away that mass of human guilt which lay, like the stone on our Saviour's grave, entombing all their hopes, and rendering it impossible for them to recover themselves from the condemnation and ruin in which they were involved.

Those who dispute the divinity of Christ act consistently in explaining away his sacrifice and atonement; the two doctrines are inseparably connected, and must stand or fall together. But they who are not so taught, but believe, in deference to apostolic testimony, that Jesus Christ "was with God," and "was God," will admit, with the greatest readiness and gratitude, that he came for the purpose of redemption. And how is this effected? Jesus Christ was made under the law, who was not originally under it, for the purpose of producing that righteousness, and creating that fund of merit in the eyes of an infinitely wise and holy Being, which should be imputed for the benefit of penitent believers, by dying on the cross a death which he never merited; and thus working out a justification, from which the spiritual wants of all mankind should be supplied, if they received his testimony and believed on his name. The character in which he appeared was that of a substitute; it was also that of days-man, a person who mediates between

two contending parties for the purpose of reconciliation. He alone being God as well as man, and thus laying his hands on both, was capable of accomplishing this great object; of satisfying the divine justice, and opening for guilty creatures an approach to the throne of heaven. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." He was oppressed, and he was afflicted;" or, as it is translated by Lowth (and very accurately, in my humble opinion), "it was exacted of him, and he was made answerable." The vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice, the vicarious character of his appearance on earth, runs through all the statements in the New Testament. It is on this account that our warmest gratitude is challenged, and our strictest obedience required. "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." "He that knew no sin was made sin for us." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

It is undoubtedly for the wisdom of the Divine Majesty to determine whether the law shall take its original course, or receive such a diversion as shall insure all the objects for which it was designed. It belongs, indeed, to the Divine Being to be just; but, if all the ends of justice be obtained by the substitution of another in the place of the offender, shall we impose limits on the decisions of the Almighty, and say that the right of dispensing with a law, as to the exact direction it may take, is not within the prerogative of Him by whom it was made and promulgated?

It belongs to him whose law is offended to determine in what way he will treat the offender; and it is perfectly competent for him to satisfy his own justice by some other method, and to substitute for the death of

the criminal the sacrifice and mediation of another, provided all the purposes which could have resulted from the condign punishment of sinners be equally effected.

But believing, as we do, that Jesus Christ is a divine person, the law of God is magnified by his death; the glory of the divine character as a holy being, his hatred of sin, his attachment to the law as a law of purity, appear to be greatly enhanced, and recommended to our notice with the highest advantage, in consequence of this sublime and astonishing event. If our Saviour was indeed the Son of God, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," then, to see him exhibited on the cross, dying under the divine wrath, and crying in the bitterness of his soul, "my God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" is to behold a more costly offering to divine justice, a more glorious assertion of the majesty of the law of God, than could have been displayed in the punishment of millions of creatures, or of worlds. Here we see the glory of the divine character shining forth in a manner the most consistent, harmonious, and consolatory, in the propitiation of Christ. Him hath God "set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

He came "to redeem them that were under the law;" and under this comprehensive title is included all mankind; Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, learned and unlearned: wherever human nature is diffused, transgression is diffused with it; wherever a child of Adam is found, there is found one who is under the law; it is a part of his nature, it is a condition of his being, to be born under the law. But as many as are under the law "are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is for deliverance from this curse, which extinguishes every ray of hope, and shuts us up to eternal darkness, that we are indebted entirely to the mediation of our blessed Re-

deemer. He has delivered us "from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

We have yet to distinguish what is the effect of the divine appointment, and what is the natural result, in the great transactions connected with the sufferings of Christ. It is the effect of divine appointment that Jesus Christ became incarnate, that he was made capable of dying, by assuming a frail and finite nature. This is to be resolved solely into the sovereign pleasure of God; no reason can be assigned for it but his infinite mercy, no other explanation given than that "God is love." But when we look at this event in another stage of it, when we consider Jesus Christ as placed under these circumstances, as actually "made of a woman," and "made under the law," by that mysterious union of the divine and human natures; when we contemplate him as performing what he did perform, and suffering what he did suffer, as *our* substitute and on *our* account,—the necessary consequence is such a vindication of the divine character, such a display of the holiness and justice of God, that no lower effect could result from it than the justification and acceptance of all penitent believers. Christ could not but merit eternal life, and purchase for us the blessings of a glorious immortality, if we are interested by faith in the benefits of his redemption. The economy of our redemption proceeds entirely from God, but the connexion of its parts is not entirely *arbitrary*. They cohere together *necessarily;* and the sacrifice of Christ is effectual for the salvation of his people, not merely because God chose to annex such a value to it as might have been transferred to the blood of bulls and goats, but because the blood poured forth upon the cross was the blood of his own Son. It is the dignity of the victim which has completely satisfied the justice of the Almighty; and the redundancy of his merits that has procured for us higher blessings than we can either imagine or comprehend.

The apostle speaks with the greatest confidence, in contrasting the vain sacrifices of the law with the inherent sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. "If the

blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." He has effected for us, *necessarily*, an entire exemption from all liability to punishment, and procured us a title to the blessedness of heaven, because he was the Son of God; and we are interested in him.

It is said, moreover, that he redeemed them that were under the law, that they "might receive the adoption of sons." The immediate effect of Christ's death is the imputation of his righteousness to the believer, and this righteousness produces an instant acquittal from punishment; but such was the exuberance of his merits, such the dignity of his person, and the high complacency of the Father in his work, that it was worthy of him to bestow on them who were members of his Son, greater blessings than those which their first parents had forfeited. It was not merely to relieve from misery that Christ died; it was not only justification that was the fruit of his sufferings; but adoption into the family of heaven, the privileges of sons and daughters for all his believing people. In consequence of being united to Christ by faith and the Spirit, we partake of his peculiar prerogatives; and because he was the Son of God, God has "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus we are "no longer servants, but children, being made nigh by the blood of Christ," and raised, we have reason to believe, to a greater height of happiness and glory than we could have aspired to reach, had we continued in a state of immaculate purity. Christ has *added* to our original brightness; he has not only redeemed us from the first transgression, but *accumulated* blessings which man, even in innocence, could never have obtained.

"Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, that as sin had reigned unto death, even so might grace

reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Now every humble believer, every penitent approaching to the sacrifice of the Son of God, when he feels his conscience relieved from a sense of guilt, finds at the same time, through the anointing of the Spirit of God, a peace and joy, a confidence and trust springing up in his mind, which bespeaks a new relation; he approaches the Divine Being in a domestic character; he says, *My* father! God discloses to him his tenderest compassion, taking him, as it were, to his arms, rejoicing over him, and making him a son and heir of the Most High God. Therefore, henceforth he walks with God as a dear child, an imitator of his perfections, a sharer of the fulness of the glory of his heavenly Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." Such appellations as these it would have been impious to assume, if God himself had not revealed them to us in his word, such privileges never entered into the contemplation of men in the most exalted state of perfection. God hath "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!"

Recollect, that if we are under the law, it is in consequence of not having approached to Christ by faith, and not having received the testimony of God respecting him. Recollect, also, that if we are under the law, we are under the curse; no middle state can be devised; there is no state betwixt a state of condemnation, and a state of justification; the legal state, which is one of bondage and fear, and the filial state, which is one of confidence and joy; no medium between that state of distance from God in which he appears as an enemy, and the condition of being adopted into his family, and an heir of his kingdom. There is an infinite variety in the human character, there is nothing more mutable than the apparent state of man; but there is an impassable barrier, a fixed line of demarcation, which separates the children of

God from the children of the devil. Those who do not receive Christ by faith, remain under the law, and are exposed to all its penalties; they live under its curse; at home, abroad, in solitude, in company, in suffering, in joy, in life and death, in every scene of existence, in every variety of condition, the wrath of God, like a dense cloud, hangs over them, replete with all the elements of misery and despair; and it must break upon them sooner or later. It approaches nearer and nearer; and is only prevented, by the slender thread on which their life depends, from discharging its fury on their devoted heads. Nothing can save but the death of Christ, no other name is given under heaven; this is the object to which the eye of faith, must be ever directed,—"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Have you looked to Him? Look into yourselves, and you find nothing but matter for despondency; look into your own hearts, and into your own conduct, and your performances will but remind you of the inadequacy and imperfection of your obedience. Know yourselves, and you know only what must minister to despair; but "*this is life eternal* to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." If you come to Christ and commune with him, you will find that poverty is exchanged for riches; condemnation for justification; dismay, and fear, and distrust of God, for a firm reliance on his promises, a strong hold on his mercy, and a filial relation to him as your heavenly Father.

We might suppose that, if men believed these truths in any degree, they would all be either rejoicing in Christ's redemption, or earnestly pressing forward, to obtain it; that every assembly would be divided into two classes,—those who, having embraced the salvation which is by Christ, find in him the joy and comfort of their lives, and those who, not having found this inestimable treasure, are earnestly desiring to possess it, and sedulously devoted to the search.

But that there should be persons neutral and unconcerned, believing at the same time, that the wrath of God is kindled against them, that they are hastening to

the divine tribunal, and that those who die in their sins will sink into destruction, is, indeed, infatuation that wants a name; angels look upon it with unutterable surprise, and their joy is proportionably great when they see one sinner repenting. But if there is joy in the presence of the bright inhabitants of heaven over a converted soul, what should be the joy of those to whom the intelligence of a Saviour is brought, who are invited to partake of the salvation which is prepared for them, and pressed to enter into alliance with God? Hear, then, the proclamation which is made to every one of you; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else!" "Fury is not in me; who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together:—or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace; and he shall make peace with me." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

These are truths which you have heard from time to time, but they are not on that account less essential to your welfare; for that very reason it is necessary that they should be reiterated, and that the "pure minds" of the most eminent Christians should "be stirred up" by them to fresh diligence and zeal. They are the bread of life, the food of the family of God; all real christians taste of them, and are sustained and fitted by them for all the functions and duties of the christian warfare.

Until you partake of this bread you have no life in you; the spirit is dead, the soul is withered and blasted, torpid and inactive, and lost to God; there is no vital union betwixt you and the Father of Spirits, you are severed from the spring of all felicity, by being in a state of alienation from God. Then will you begin to live indeed, to know the *divine* life, when you come and taste of the salvation of God, when you cast yourselves on the mercy of the Saviour, and say, "Lord, save or we perish." Then the mercy of God will be revealed unto you, and

you will one day join in singing "a new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb," which none can sing but they who are redeemed from the earth.

III. In the third place, permit me to observe, that we have presented to us, in this passage, the fitness of the season at which Jesus Christ was manifested; it is described as "the fulness of time." It was the fulness of time, because it was the period foretold by the prophets; Jesus Christ appeared exactly at the time predicted by those who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It was foretold by Jacob, in his dying moments, that it was to take place before political power departed from Judah,—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Our Saviour appeared at that critical period; the sceptre had recently departed from Judah, the semblance of political power had vanished from the Jewish nation, Herod had reigned for some time, and it was evident, therefore, that He that was to come was at hand.

It was foretold that it was to be during the existence of the second temple. The prophet Haggai thus comforts those who had witnessed the splendours of the first, and mourned over the meanness of the second as compared with that of Solomon: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." As if he had said, I can easily accumulate riches far exceeding those which Solomon collected, and which may be lavished by the monarchs of the earth in all the exuberance of their wealth, "the silver and the gold are mine;" but I will bestow on this house a nobler gift, here will I display a costlier treasure, "in this place

will I give peace." There Jesus Christ, the great peace-maker, preached the gospel of peace; in that temple he wrought many of his miracles; and in its immediate vicinity, on Mount Calvary, offered himself up for the sins of the world.

It was foretold, moreover, that it should be within "seventy weeks" from the period marked out by Daniel; and though some difficulty exists as to the mode of computation, yet, on every principle it is plain, that they have long since elapsed; and the Jews are, therefore, under the greatest delusion in looking for the Messiah at a future period. Indeed, such is the antipathy of the Jews to this prophecy, that it is a popular proverb among them, "Cursed is he that counteth the weeks."

In short, all the characters of time, though they are not very numerous, as they are not equally important with some others, and were probably revealed only for the purpose of uniting the expectations of the Jews to a particular and defined period; all these characters perfectly conspire with the æra of Christ's appearance. It was on this account, probably, that such a general expectation existed, when Christ came, of the near approach of some exalted personage. In former times, no one was asked whether he was the Christ; but no sooner had John begun to preach a holy doctrine than the question was put to him, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" This expectation is noticed by heathen writers as prevailing over great part of the East, but especially in Judæa and the surrounding country. It was during a period of the profoundest peace; the temple of Janus was shut, and all nations were kept as in a state of watchful silence, waiting for the appearance of this Divine Person, and with ears open to catch the accents of his "still small voice."

It was also a period of considerable advancement in politics, in legislation, in science and arts, and manners: mankind were in a great degree civilized; learning had long flourished, and the most brilliant geniuses had appeared that had ever adorned the annals of human kind. It was therefore a most favourable time to prevent imposture in matter of fact. It was also an age the farthest removed from that credulity which distinguishes ignorant nations; an age of scepticism, when disbelief of all religion prevailed to a great extent amongst the learned. The Epicurean doctrine, which maintained the indifference of human actions and the cessation of existence at death, had swallowed up all other sects. The disciples of this philosophy denied a Deity, or asserted such an ideal one as remains in a state of torpor and inactivity, heedless of the concerns of this lower world. No period could be conceived so little adapted to the exhibition of a *false*, and so well calculated to put to the test the merits of a *true*, religion. They had wits sharpened by curiosity, so that they would eagerly inquire after whatever was new; but, at the same time, they were disposed to treat with contempt that which pretended to be supernatural. They had long been accustomed to laugh at their own gods; and though they might imagine that there was some safety attached to the ancient superstitions, yet in their private life and expectation, it is evident that they did not in the least connect any serious anticipation of happiness with the worship, or punishment with the neglect, of their deities. The Infinite Wisdom saw fit to select this time to silence for ever the vain babblings of philosophy, to "destroy the wisdom of the wise," and "bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

It was a most favourable time, inasmuch as it was a period of toleration. Had it been at a later period, when men began to attach that degree of importance to religion which was its due, the infant sect might have been crushed at once. But the Divine Being was pleased to suspend the fury of emperors, and to preserve his people by inspiring some measure of the spirit of toleration in the breasts of those who held the sceptres of this world. Nero's persecution was confined, we have reason to believe, principally to Rome and its environs; and ages passed away before any great attempt was made by the rulers of Rome to put down this new religion.

It cannot be said that Christianity stole on the world

like a thief in the night; it cannot be said that it owed its success to the credulity of mankind, and that if the generations among whom it at first appeared had lived now, they would have reasoned to better purpose. For the productions of *that* age are the admiration of *this;* in works of taste and imagination it has never been surpassed, and it is sometimes considered as the highest praise of writers of the present day, that they exhibit a near approach to the inimitable beauties of the authors who then flourished. The earth was, therefore, in a state to receive this precious seed; He who appoints the seasons, and brings on seed-time and harvest, saw that this was a proper time in which to plant that tree of righteousness which was to stretch wide its branches till it overshadowed the world, and whose fruit was to be "for the healing of the nations."

The fulness of the time was come:—Hence we remark that the event here referred to was the most important that had ever distinguished the annals of the world. The epoch will arrive when this world will be thought of as nothing but as it has furnished a stage for the "manifestation of the Son of God;" when his birth, his death, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to glory, and his second appearance, events inseparably connected, will concentrate within themselves all the interest of history; when war and peace, and pestilence and famine, and plenty and want, and life and death, will have spent their force, and leave nothing but the result, the permanent, eternal result of Christ's manifestation upon earth; when every other distinction which has marked the individuals, or generations, of our race shall be swept away, and all shall be alike distinguished in the annals of the universe by the new and awful character of being associated in the same nature with the Son of God. In the effects of this gracious interposition you are all interested; of its fruits you are invited to partake; you may now reject the offer, you may now refuse this great salvation, but the period of neglect will soon be over—you may now think lightly of the Saviour, but these thoughts will soon be ended. The moment

you enter eternity you will see things as they are; the greatness of Christ will present itself to your eye, the vastness of his redemption, the importance of his mediatorial work, the infinite felicity of being saved, the unspeakable misery of being lost,—the thoughts of these will dwell with you for ever. Those who now neglect the gospel will never cease to curse the infatuation of putting away from them the proffered mercy, and judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Now, with drowsy attention, with thoughts dissipated amidst a crowd of vanities, you hear the record of this great doctrine; you have Christ set forth by his ministers as crucified among you; you hear with listless and careless minds these glad tidings, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But let eternity disclose itself to your view; let a short period be past either in the enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, or in the dark regions of despair, and how will these subjects then appear? Eternity will not be too long either to rue that neglect which has plucked down ruin on yourselves, or to rejoice in that grace of God which has made you wise unto salvation. All the happiness, and splendour, and glory, which shall then be realized by all the ransomed people of God, are so many fruits of the purchase by Christ's death. There is not single blessing which shall then be enjoyed which is not to be ascribed to the love of Christ in dying for our iniquities, and "washing us from our sins in his own blood."

"What think you of Christ?" The time will come when you *must* think very seriously of him. Some of you, I trust, have thought of him to great and happy effect, have trusted your salvation in his hands, and are "looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God." Remember that whatever be the state of your hearts towards him, you *must* stand at his judgment seat; at his tribunal we *must* all appear, to give an account of the reception we have given to his apostles, to his ministers, to the words of eternal life contained in

this book. Then those only will have peace and joy who will possess the consciousness that they have embraced Christ; that they have trusted in him in life and in death, have walked in communion with him, kept his precepts, imitated his example, and laid up all their hopes in him, as the Saviour of sinners.

I cannot close without reminding every person present of the awful consequences of remaining under the law. Recollect, wherever you are, that if you are not vital believers in Christ, if you know not what it is to have trusted your souls in his hands, and to be justified by faith in his blood, you are under the law. Rejoice not as others rejoice, you have nothing to do with joy; it would be madness in you to taste of joy till this grand impediment to your happiness is removed. If you are under the curse of God, what have you to do with joy? The joy of a maniac dancing in his chains, the joy of a criminal on his way to execution, is reasonable in comparison with the joy of the man who says, "Soul, take thine ease," whilst the wrath of God hangs over him, and he knows not how soon it may fall.

Let us, then, all flee to the Saviour; let us, without delay, lay hold of the great atonement; thus shall we "be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Christ is ready to receive us; Christ says to every one, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, "seek ye, then, the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

XXI.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT IN THE STATE OF THE RICH AND THE POOR.*

[PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 20, 1829.]

PROVERBS xxii. 2.—*The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all*

THIS book consists of a number of short sentences and aphorisms, that relate to human life and manners, and to virtue and vice. It is not necessary for us to attempt to trace any particular connexion between the passage which has just been read and the surrounding context. What was the train of thought by which the inspired writer was conducted from one of these truths to another, it is unnecessary anxiously to inquire. It is obvious there was some law of association which governed his mind, though it eludes every attempt at investigation on our part, and would lead us into a useless and intricate research. The doctrine which is to be deduced from the words you have just heard read, is, however, worthy of our most serious regard. It declares there is a natural equality in mankind, notwithstanding the diversified appearances of some of them, and the different stations they are destined to occupy in the present condition of being: it assures us that the rich and the poor meet together, that they coincide and agree in many of the most important circumstances, and that the differences which appear to exist between them are, for the most part, of a superficial, and therefore of a transitory nature. "The Lord is the maker of them all." The sacred writer thus introduces all of us into an equal and common relation to God, who is the great Parent of us all. We are the creatures of the same hand, the subjects of the same government; we occupy the same economy of divine providence; and, as to our destination,

* Printed from the Notes of J. R. Mills, Esq.

we all stand in relation to the same future and eternal state of being. These two distinctions and divisions of society have existed in every period. It is impossible to avoid them: and any attempt to establish an equality of possessions in the present world, would be replete with disappointment, confusion, rapine, and misery. The greatest disturbances mankind has ever experienced, have arisen from abortive attempts of this nature: nor can any one seriously consider the causes from which these two conditions of society spring, but he must despair of ever realizing any thing like equality, or any thing approaching to equality, as to the possessions and enjoyments of the present state.

It has been urged in favour of such attempts, and with some degree of plausibility, that a scheme of this kind was executed at the first beginning of Christianity, that the saints at Jerusalem had nothing which they called their own, but threw their property into a common stock; and out of that stock they relieved the distress and poverty of their persecuted brethren. But there is great reason to conclude, as Mosheim* has very judiciously shown, that there was no such thing as community of goods established among them, and that the right of property was not formally relinquished; but that it was customary for all who possessed property, to hold themselves in readiness to relieve the exigencies of those who applied to them. It does not appear that it was ever hinted at by the apostles themselves, who were at Jerusalem, or made even a temporary law of that church; but every one was left to act agreeably to the dictates of his own mind: and the apostle Peter aggravates the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira, by declaring, that while the estate "was in their own possession, was it not their own; and after it was sold, was it not in their own power;" and that no necessity existed for resorting to falsehood, when they laid the price of it at the feet of the apostles. It never prevailed in any other church. We have no intimation that it was adopted in any other

* See his "Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians." (Vidal's translation,) vol. i. p. 202, and the reference there made.—Ed.

of the great churches, which were planted by the apostle Paul; and in his epistles there is no reference to any similar regulation, though he alludes there to a large collection, which himself and the other apostles were engaged in making in those churches, for relieving the distress of the saints of Jerusalem. The pressure of calamity was local and temporary, it was occasioned by peculiar circumstances of time and place, and never pervaded the other parts of Christendom. It never was made a law by the apostle Paul; nor, as a permanent regulation, was it countenanced by the apostles at Jerusalem.

It would be wasting your time, to spend more words in pointing out the folly and absurdity of every attempt to equalize the possessions of mankind. I am persuaded there are none here, that permit themselves to be deluded by the sophistries of the designing and wicked who propagate this notion. But it is of great importance for us to consider, because it is intimately connected with our duties and prospects, in what great points the rich and poor meet together, and that the Lord is the maker of them all: that each of these respective classes may learn their proper duties to one another, that the poor may learn not to envy and murmur, and the rich not to despise and oppress. Then will society be happy, when the poor and the rich unite in spirit to promote the great purposes of social order and happiness, in entire and equal subjection to the Father of spirits, who is the fountain and source of every good.

In considering this subject permit me to observe,

I. That the rich and the poor meet together *in the participation of a common nature.* They are equal sharers in the common nature of humanity, in distinction from those who are in a lower, and from those who are in a higher order of beings. The faculties by which this nature makes itself known, are exhibited with equal clearness, and certainty, and activity, in both these classes. The poor as well as the rich give the most unequivocal indications of the possession of that reason, which is the grand distinction of man, and forms the

chief difference between mankind and the beasts that perish. Reason may be cultivated to a higher extent by some of the rich, in consequence of the more improved education which they may procure, and of the leisure which their station commands. But decisive indications of a reasonable nature are presented in the lowest walks of society; and they are sometimes such as greatly to surpass and eclipse the indications of intellect in the higher classes. Every age of society has produced persons who have broken through the difficulties and disadvantages of their station; who have surmounted the obstacles by which they were surrounded, and have reached a high position in a career of virtuous probation among those who have set out on a more elevated stage. And, on the contrary, among the sons of opulence, some have been found who possess such an imbecility as no education could remedy; their knowledge has never been of any use to them; and the learning which has been bestowed upon them has rather been an incumbrance than an assistance to them: their knowledge has remained a dead mass, which the mind could never animate,—a sort of raw produce, out of which nothing useful or ornamental to society could be extracted. When this imbecility has prevailed to a certain extent, so as to invite a comparison with the degree of knowledge which the mind is capable of attaining, it shows its native disadvantage, and is never more conspicuous than in the case of those who unite a large portion of human attainment with a portion of radical imbecility.

The poor and the rich have equally the power of ascertaining general principles, of forming conclusions as to the future from the consideration of past events, and of rendering their senses conducive to those general and abstract ideas in which all real science and knowledge consists. Thus you see that the poor and the rich, in the great faculty of the understanding, afford proofs of equality; and no difference exists between them but such as may be easily accounted for by the circumstances of human life.

With respect to their moral sensibilities also, the rich

and the poor meet together. They possess alike that conscience which "either accuses or excuses," and they possess that cognizance of the purposes and intents of the mind, which connects it with a system of legislation, with the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment. The poorest, as well as the richest, is capable of feeling these sentiments. The hopes and the fears of a future world act as powerfully upon the poor as upon the rich; and that legislation which appeals to the conscience, and which refers to the primary distinctions of the human mind between right and wrong, is calculated to take as much hold of the one as of the other.

In regard, also, to devotion, which by some men of profound thought is declared to be the great characteristic of man, in opposition to the brutes that perish, these two classes meet together. There are many examples, among the poor, of persons who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him." In the poorest breast we find the flame of devotion burn; and with an intenseness and purity as great as in those who are more exalted. Though the latter may have some advantages in the greater extent of their knowledge, that deficiency is frequently compensated to the former, by a greater simplicity and unity of attention, and by their entire devotedness to one object. It is a question of much difficulty to determine which of these stations is more favourable to the cultivation of piety, and whether poverty, with all its destitution, is a greater hindrance to the divine life than affluence, with all its temptations. A course of piety is *difficult* for all, but *practicable* for every individual; and the light of eternity alone can decide whose situation has been the most hazardous, and whose the most favourable, to the growth of religion.

The rich and the poor meet together in the primary passions of the human mind, which give birth to whatever is most distinguishing in man: and these are found in the same state in the rich and in the poor, essentially considered. The exhibition of them by the latter is more private, giving birth to good purposes; but with

regard to the former, the exhibition of them is more public, because they stand in more powerful and exalted stations, and act on a more extended stage. If we trace the passions of men to their primary elements, we shall find the virtues and vices of the poor and of the rich spring from the same sources. The guilty passions that agitate the breast of the peasant, and lead him to disturb the peace of his neighbourhood, are of the same nature with those that disturb the tranquillity of nations, in the breasts of princes. The same injustice, the same low ambition, the same love of acquiring that which is not his own, that renders a peasant a nuisance to the village where he resides, renders an unjust prince the terror of his subjects, the source of iniquitous wars, and a stain and reproach to his species. The person who, in the poorest situation, in a peasant's cottage, is led by a love of order, and by native benevolence of mind, to diffuse peace and comfort around his own circle, and, so far as his influence extends, in his own neighbourhood, evinces the same spirit with the individual who would diffuse peace and order through a distracted empire, and who lays the foundation of tranquillity for distant ages, by the enactment of the most wholesome regulations and the most enlightened laws.

The more we analyse actions, and trace them to their primary elements, the more we shall perceive the identity between the rich and the poor, as to their intellectual, moral, accountable, and devotional capacities. The rich and the poor occupy the same department of the universe: they are subjects of the same moral government, and are destined to be judged equally and impartially, by the same laws, at the final and awful distribution of reward to the just and to the unjust.

II. I would observe that the rich and the poor meet together *in the process of the same social economy*, in the same necessary intercourse of human life; they are closely connected with each other, and equally form parts of the same human family. It is impossible for us to say which of these subdivisions of society is, in its place, the most important; which of them ought to be

most respected; which of them most cherished. The higher can by no means say to the lower, with truth or propriety, "I have no need of thee;" nor can the lower retort upon the higher, "I have no need of thee." If the lower order occupy the place of the feet and hands, which execute the purposes of the mind, the higher occupy the place of the head, which is the seat of counsel, and is necessary for the direction and preservation of the whole social body. Here we see how necessary both these classes are to the general order, and to the diffusion of peace and happiness throughout the whole. According to the degree in which this is felt, in proportion as the industrious citizen, the ingenious mechanic, or the laborious husbandman who cultivates the soil, in any community, is destitute of encouragement, society languishes; and in proportion to the reasonable, not redundant, remuneration of labour to the industrious classes of the community, is the diffusion of comfort and enjoyment through the whole body.

The higher classes must, on reflection, perceive, that they are indebted to the lower for all they enjoy. The distinctions of wealth, and stations of authority, which they are so proud to display, and by which the higher classes are raised above the poor, are supported by the produce of the field and of art; and these are combined by the hand of honest labour, in such processes, as the ingenuity of the lower classes has devised. "The king himself is served by the field." Those higher classes are supported by the continual machine of labour, which is going on among the inferior classes of society; and, were it to stop, it would tend to the stagnation, instead of the steady flow, of luxurious enjoyment among those higher classes. The poor might here, with greater propriety than the rich, adopt the language of an early apologist for christianity, and say, "Were we to retire from you, you would be astonished at your own desolation; we should leave you little but your temples and your gods."* There may be some who might not choose to

* Mr. Hall here evidently referred to the language of the celebrated Tertullian, *Apologet*, cap. xxxvii. "Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia

adopt the language of this statement; but it is not too much for the poor to say to the rich. Were they to retire, no mind can adequately portray the lengths and depths of that desolation and misery, which would be sustained by all else, but especially by those in the higher walks of life. In vain would they retain wealth, if there were no hands to be employed; and, were no commodities of any kind presented to them, they would live in a state of destitution, greater than the meanest of their dependents, or they must endeavour to apply themselves separately to those arts, each of which, in order to produce in perfection what they value, is the business of a life. The pinnacles of the proudest edifice rest on a basis, that comes into immediate contact with the surface of the earth, or is buried partly under it, and is invisible: so, all the improvements of wealth, nay, all the distinctions of royal grandeur, rest on the industry of the poor, upon their silent, unperceived industry, working out of the view, and frequently out of the contemplation, of those who are most indebted to it. Let no one look with contempt on the meanest of his fellow-creatures, on account of his having to gain his bread "by the sweat of his brow." That was the appointed lot of our first parents after their fall, and it was the condition of *all* in the primitive state of society. It is

implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum. *Sola vobis relinquimus templa.*" There may probably be, as is sometimes conjectured, a little overcharge of rhetorical exaggeration in this; yet, whoever meditates upon the report made by the circumspect and prudent Pliny to the emperor Trajan (Lib. x. Ep. 97), will perceive that even in his time, at least in the Pontic province, the christians far outnumbered the heathen worshippers. "Multi omnis ætatis, *omnis ordinis*, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. Neque civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est." From what follows, it is evident, too, that heathenism had been in great peril, and the temples nearly forsaken:—"*Certè satis constat, prope jam desolata templa cœpisse celebrari*, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti, passimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur." This, however, by the way: for though it bears upon an important point in the history of christianity it falls not within the scope of this sermon.—Ed.

to the industry of the lower classes, that the distinctions and splendour of the highest are to be entirely ascribed.

On the other hand, let not the poor say to the rich, "we have no need of you." Were they to retire, the effects would be of a very different kind, but they would be equally melancholy. The destruction of the social fabric would be the infallible result. That wisdom which is necessary for the good of the whole, is found in persons of exalted station. There is the mind that casts its eye over the whole machine of society, discovers its abuses, and aims to correct them; the mind which watches over the execution of the law, gives birth to splendid examples, and refines and embellishes whatever it embraces. It comprehends the order of civil government, and those principles whose operation harmonizes all. These are founded on wisdom, deliberation, and experience, and on the force with which public opinion arms those who are placed in elevated stations. Each of these classes, then, is, in its separate place, essential to the welfare of society; and the whole has for its basis the industry of the poor. Were all those, who by their leisure are able to cultivate their own minds, to diffuse the knowledge of true morality, and embellish the manners of mankind, by engrafting new improvements, giving existence to wholesome laws, and seeing them properly executed, what a paradise would the world become!

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These considerations will more than reconcile us to that inequality in the condition of society, which for the most part prevails; they will lead us to admire the infinite wisdom of God, who has implanted those principles which tend to give security and happiness to all, to the poor as well as the rich. By these means society is really united together; so that, while every one is consulting his own interest, he is at the same time promoting the interest of the whole, even more entirely and effectually, than he could have done, if he had separately and intentionally devoted himself to it; and each acquires, by the force of his industry, what no compulsory distri

bution of labour could possibly have secured. You see how admirable is the wisdom displayed in such a constitution of society, as by the union of its parts under the administration of a wise government, renders every individual, who acts most agreeably to his own interest, at the same time the promoter of the public good. Such a state of society could by no possibility be produced by any technical or mechanical arrangements. The infinite wisdom of God works out this order from the selfish passions of men, and leads each, from a consideration of his own interests in his own station, to operate most effectually for the general benefit. Were those who live in the higher stations of society to lavish all that could be spared from their own expenditure by the most rigid parsimony, and apply it in mere almsgiving, it would be infinitely more injurious than their indulging in even the luxuries of their station: and the proper outlay of their wealth, in the conveniences and comforts of life, is productive of infinitely more good, and of an order of good more than equivalent to any, which an expenditure to the same amount in almsgiving and charity could effect. The rich, enjoying with moderation that affluence which God has put into their hands, without allowing their reason to be inflamed with pride and sensuality, and every one enjoying the good things of this life, at the same time preserving the power of meeting the exigencies of others, much more contributes to the healthful state of society, than the largest distribution of almsgiving, were such an exhibition of enjoyment and wealth to cease; and the poor, while only earning their bread "by the sweat of their brow," lend themselves to the diffusion of happiness and comfort over the whole.

III. We remark that the rich and poor meet together *in the house of God.* If there be a place, and a time, where those sentiments should be suspended, and at which the emotions connected with the operation of riches and poverty, and the conduct to which they give rise, should suffer a temporary pause, the house of God is precisely that place, and the worship of God, that time; when the rich should forget they are rich, and

where the poor should forget they are poor; where they are called to reflect upon that original equality in which mankind was created. In the presence of the great and good Being, they should forget all their distinctions, and recollect their essential relation to Him who is equally the Father of all mankind.

James, when he was addressing the poor and the rich who were under the influence of christian principles, says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low; because, as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways." The rich man, if he is a christian, will rejoice in that he is made low; will rejoice in returning to the presence of his God, under a sense of his nothingness, and with a consciousness of meriting nothing: this ought to be the experience of every one who is approaching the footstool of the Divine Majesty. The poor man, on the contrary, delights in being truly exalted. He reflects that he is adopted into that family, of which all the saints "in heaven and earth are named;" he rejoices in the presence of the rich, under a sense of spiritual elevation. The rich descends, in the presence of the poor, into a voluntary humiliation. The one feels the pleasure of descending, while he reflects on his meanness and guilt as a sinner, and lays aside the consideration of all that might have a tendency to lift him up in his own eyes; and the other finds unspeakable consolation in losing sight of his poverty, and in contemplating only the ineffable dignity to which he is exalted as a child of God, a believer in Christ, and an heir of glory. Into the presence of the Divine Being they do not come as rich and poor. It is no part of their business, it is not fit for the occasion on which they are convened. They are convened on common ground, under a deep sense of the necessities of their common nature. Apart from any relations they bear to each other, they prostrate themselves before the infinite God, they depre-

cate the anger which none can sustain, but which they have equally merited; which is not to be shunned by human arrangements, or by the efforts of human power and influence; they supplicate that mercy which is equally revealed to the rich and to the poor, and which is the only stay and support of a sinking universe. That mercy is divinely free, through the sacrifice and blood of the divine Son. They strengthen themselves for their race, which will terminate, as to all, in an everlasting condition of glory or of woe. In imitation of the holy apostles, they gather fresh grace as they approach Him who is the fountain of grace. They implore the fulfilment of his promises, and the influences of that Spirit who is equally necessary to sanctify the body of the elect of God, to whatever stations they belong, or by whatever variety of fortune they may be distinguished. They look forward to that "new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and to those loveliest regions of light and glory, where all the distinctions of the present life will be entirely forgotten, where the meanest will have a portion with the most elevated in the favour of God, and "a crown of immortal glory." In this sacred presence all mean and transitory distinctions are lost sight of, are levelled; all mankind feel themselves on one common footing, and prostrate themselves in the presence of the Divine Majesty, who is all in all. There "the poor man rejoices in that he is exalted, and the rich in that he is made low."

A very celebrated poet and nobleman, who died some years ago, was in the habit of attending a prayer-meeting in the country village where he lived, and where a few poor people were accustomed to assemble to seek the especial presence of God. It was at first customary for these humble persons to make way for him, if he happened to come in a little after the appointed time; but he expressed his unwillingness to receive these marks of attention and respect, and said, he should be contented if he were left to occupy the lowest station. In other places he claimed for himself, and thought he had a right to claim, the distinctions of his rank; but

there he felt himself in the same situation with themselves. In this state of mind he entered into the genuine feelings of christianity. He delighted to come into the presence of that Being, who levels all distinctions; He who smites the proud with a stroke which can never be survived, and has declared his judgement of the humble and contrite in terms which can never be forgotten.

They who cherish other sentiments are forgetful that it is the same Great Being who is the protector of all his poor, and who regards with contempt those who despise others that are permanently afflicted with adverse fortune. In the divine presence each of these distinctions is alike lost sight of; and all true Christians will at last be brought to feel their relation to one common Father, as heirs of the same inheritance. There is "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all." They embrace each other as fellow-heirs of the same eternal inheritance. Let us, therefore, enter into the presence of God more under the influence of christian sentiments. Let the poor forget themselves as poor, and consider themselves as rich in being children of God, and heirs of heaven. Let the rich recollect his wealth only as a trust with which he is charged. Let him forget all but his responsibility, and that will constitute a motive to humility in the presence of Almighty God. The utility of divine worship in this case appears most evident. The sentiments it calls forth, are such as hinder our running into the excesses to which we are exposed: and nothing is more salutary or wholesome, than that temporary suspension of undue notions of rank, which is derived from an approach to that Being with whom all are on a level, whose majesty fills heaven and earth, and in whose presence nothing can be exalted, except as he draws it towards himself. As I perceive the time is advancing, I shall not enlarge on these considerations, but advert very briefly to one or two remaining particulars. I will add,

IV. That the rich and poor meet together *in the circumstances of their entrance into this world, and in the*

circumstances of their exit out of it. We have beheld the identity of human nature, notwithstanding the artificial disguises which these distinctions bestow for a time. Look at the great man in his origin. Look at him as he comes into this world, and say whether you can detect the least difference between the offspring of the peasant and of the prince. They come into the world under marks of the same destitution, and weakness, and misery. Both alike enter with cries expressive of distress, as if conscious of their arrival in a valley of tears. Both would close their eyes in darkness, were it not for the breasts that give them suck, and the knees that sustain them. Both are indebted to aliment which nature has administered to the mother for the support of her children; and both, by the tenderness excited by their cries and tears, gain access to a mother's care, and to a father's heart. The Deity has provided no outward physiognomy to distinguish the rich and the poor: and no inquisitive eye can discover to which of these classes any new-born infant is likely to belong.

Let us here trace the progress of their being farther until we come to their final exit, and to their departure out of this world. In some of the most important particulars they entirely coincide as to the circumstances of their departure hence. At the moment when they quit this state of being the poor man lays aside his poverty, the rich man lays aside all the appendages of riches, his grandeur, and dignity; all are alike deposited by the possessor before he passes to the mysterious and eternal bourn. No man goes into the invisible world, no man retires to the sepulchre, without dropping the distinction of riches and poverty. The rich man, it is true, is carried to the tomb by mourners, whether real or artificial; and though survivors endeavour to maintain the distinctions of rank and elevated station in the region of destruction and mortality, yet all is in vain. They wage a fruitless war with corruption and decay. The inscription first disappears; then the monument moulders into ruin; the dust itself is scattered or mingled with surrounding earth, and the last place that knew the dead, "knows

him no more for ever." The very names of those who have most disturbed the peace of society, and have been a terror to their species while living, are heard of no more. It is left to the antiquary of a future age to speculate upon the import of the remaining letters that composed a part of their names. Where are the men of genius that lived before the flood? They have retired from the memory of mankind; history records of them only that they lived and that they died, and leaves all the rest to be filled up by conjecture and imagination.

V. This subject reminds us of that period when all the pomp and distinctions of the universe shall coincide in one point, melt into one entire mass, and present themselves in one vision. The time is coming when the rich and poor will not only meet as to the circumstances of their dying hour, but as to their allotted state and condition of being. We have seen both going to the grave. Alike they occupy the place appointed for all living; alike they seek kindred with corruption, earth, and worms. But they will appear again; and they will appear again for purposes that were never accomplished before. They will appear for the purpose of undergoing a serious review by the Master that created them, who fixed their class, and appointed their station. They will appear to account "for the deeds done in the body." Then it will be found, that many a person has occupied a station which he was not fitted to occupy; that he possessed talents which he was not willing to employ; and that he wore a character which he was not qualified to sustain. Then the Great Governor of the whole will take a review of his creatures; he will recast their parts; he will suffer none to appear but in their proper character; and the distinction of his approbation will, in no degree, turn on the transient distinctions in their present circumstances as rich and poor. The poor who has been the servant of the Most High will be made rich. No obscurity will be felt, but his lustre will be as the sun shining in his strength. Instead of persecution and oppression, he shall receive "a crown of life that fadeth not away." The rich man who was a despiser of

God, shall, at the same time,—so far from obtaining an interest in the favour of the Great Sovereign of the world,—if he looks back on the talents which he has perverted, on the opportunities he has lost, and on the force of his influence which he has not employed for the great ends of his being in serving God, and in serving his generation, he shall curse his wealth, which was the source of crime to himself and others; and will see in it a weight only sinking him lower in perdition.

The rich who have been the persecutors of the children of God, will then, in the utmost agony, lament their crime, and will "call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." The purpose for which the Divine Being will then manifest himself is such, as it was never attempted to accomplish before,—for *the trial of the actions of men.* As they are now displayed, they can only be judged upon incompetent evidence, and often upon defective principles; but then the whole character will be weighed in the balance: the destiny of every man will be adjusted, and determined, for ever. The Divine Being will sit in judgement upon every man, in order to divide mankind into two eternal states; to banish one class to the regions of darkness and despair, and to receive the other to himself; "they shall enter through the gates into the city, and reign with Him and with his Son for ever and ever."

I shall attempt a very brief improvement of this subject, by addressing a few considerations to each of the classes mentioned in the text. Let such as are rich recollect they are rich for the purpose of benefiting their generation, and that they are "the servants of the most high God." "We are not our own, but are bought with a price;" let us glorify God, whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve. These are the sentiments of every disciple of Christ, but they are not the sentiments of every one who now hears me. There are, probably, some unhappy, miserable men, who are not the disciples of Christ. Let each person estimate himself in the sight of God by this consideration: is he living to himself, or is he living to Christ? Is he living for the purpose of luxurious enjoyment?—he is walking in a vain show, and not discharging his appropriate duty, not considering his riches as the means of doing good, as talents wherewith he is to profit, and which he must occupy till the Master come. He does not consider that they are not his own; he does not use them as one who bears in mind that divine price by which he has been bought. He has no true respect to that authority under which he acts; nor does he pay allegiance to the only King of kings, and Lord of lords. We must all stand before his tribunal: God himself will be the judge. He has committed all judgement into the hands of that very Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all.

Let such persons consider seriously whether they are living to themselves or to God. Let them consider that, if they are living to themselves, they miss the very end of their being; they are committing a mistake which can never be repaired; they are guilty of an error which admits of no correction. They mistake the end of their being, which consists in glorifying God, in acquiring his image, in fulfilling his will, and in laying up treasures in heaven. They commit such an error as no human folly can equal, such as no human virtue can expiate. This is a condemning error; this is the fatal and awful mistake of men; that they live as their own, while the voice of God, the dictates of conscience, the blood of Christ, the precepts of the Spirit of truth, and the opening light of eternity, all show that "we are not our own:" they show that we are the creatures of another, the possession of another. Our Lord *will come forth;* he will discover all who have lived to themselves, he will take account of "the quick and the dead; and all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Let those who are rich remember that, as christians, it behoves them who possess riches not to fail in good works. Let them act from christian principles, and with christian motives, and with a view to christian reward. Let them recollect that they are

bound to ascertain whether they are christians. Till we are christians, we cannot serve God as christians: we can serve God only in that state which belongs to us. Till we are christians, we cannot pay due regard to his will, we cannot act with a view to his glory, nor according to the instructions of his word, nor can we seriously expect that eternal life, which rests no where but on his promise, which he will fulfil to "all that love his appearing." Let it be the care of all in the presence of God in this assembly that they be christians; let them secure a portion among the saints; let them see that they have a place among the people of God; that they are united to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named." Let them seek to be renewed, regenerated, and sanctified, and washed in the atoning blood of the Saviour, to be made members of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom; to be fitted and prepared for his eternal glory. Let them seek to be vessels of honour, sanctified by the Spirit of God, and fit for the Master's use,—fit to serve him in the lower functions of his temple on earth, and to serve him hereafter in his eternal kingdom and glory. What will it avail any of us to possess now what we must then cease to possess; what we can possess only till we arrive at the threshold of death, and shall look back on the distinctions which must then have vanished; when we lay down our bodies in the grave, and have nothing before us but a vast eternity, the complexion of which will be decided by the will of another,—by the will of that Being who sees not with the eyes of flesh and blood, before whom riches and poverty, wisdom and folly, and all physical distinctions are nothing: who will regard nothing in his creatures but the will to please him, and obedience to that will? The happiness to be obtained by faith will be infinitely superior to the happiness which is derived from the objects of sense. For a man thus to lose his own soul, will be to sacrifice the great end of his being.

But there are some here to whom the possession of riches is sanctified, who consider them as a great trust, for the use of which they are responsible, and who

are asking, What shall I do? What return shall I make to God for all his benefits? and who tremble, lest at the final account they should be found unfaithful stewards. They trust in the Saviour; they cultivate communion with God; they condescend to men of low estate; they are rich in good works; they lay up a good foundation for the time to come; they will surmount the perils of the most prosperous fortune; they will combine the riches of this world with the riches of glory; they will be distinguished in both worlds, standing complete and ready for their Master's will; they are armed for the combat in the present state, and fitted at any moment to take wing, to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Happy those who, while they have abundance of the things of this world, have also a treasure elsewhere! While they walk in light, and glory, and reputation on earth, they seek first the honour that cometh from above; they seek, indeed, *no higher honour* than that which comes from Him who is the arbiter of the destinies of all.

Let me now say a word to the poor. If they are poor, and yet partakers of true piety springing from the faith of the gospel, let them not repine. Let them indulge no envious thought at those who possess more of this world's goods than is allotted to themselves. To such I would say, Recollect that your happiness depends not on the station in life which you occupy, but on the manner in which you perform its duties. A small circle is not less complete than a large one: a humble field of occupation, yielding proper fruits in their season, will be recognized by God and approved of men. You will have the testimony of your conscience that "in simplicity, and godly sincerity, you have your conversation in the world." You will leave a testimony behind you of the power of religion: your remains will breathe a sweet odour in al the churches of which you formed a part: you will dignify a low station, you will rescue it from all reproach; for the reproach consists not in poverty, but in yielding to the temptations of poverty. Riches, in themselves, confer no lasting honour, but as they are accompanied

by a resistance to their peculiar temptations. You are walking in the footsteps of "the Lord of all," who, when he came into the world, made poverty his abode, became a companion of fishermen, and at length a com panion of sinners on the cross. Let such as are poor seek to be "rich in faith:" let them exult and rejoice in the prospect of future happiness: let them rise above the sorrows of time in the contemplation of the glory which awaits them. Your recompense is above; your pleasures are in heaven. If you are real christians, you would not relinquish one portion in heaven for all the happiness of the present state. Avoid every temptation to dishonesty, to prevarication, to envy, to murmuring, to discontent. Avoid all those temptations which arise from a narrow and scanty fortune. Show how religion can dignify the lowest station in society, and do all possible honour to that station. Thousands of saints have done this. Our Saviour illustrated the sorrows and privations of poverty; and, if you are animated by his spirit, you will walk in his steps; and after having suffered with him here, you will be also glorified together with him, and reign with him for ever and ever.

FRAGMENTS.

DEFENCE OF VILLAGE PREACHING,

HINTS ON TOLERATION,

THE RIGHT OF WORSHIP, &c.

[WRITTEN IN 1801, 1802, AND 1811.]

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

The disquisition, of which the interesting Fragments now presented to the public are alone preserved, was commenced in 1801. About that time the late Bishop Horsley advanced the opinion, in various charges and sermons, (extracts from one of which are subjoined in a note,)* that the dissenters

* Extracts from Bishop Horsley's Charge, published in 1800.

After observing that the laity of England have as little relish for Socinianism as for Atheism, and that they think much alike of him who openly disowns the Son, and of him who denies the Father; insomuch that the advocates of this blasphemy have preached themselves out of all credit with the people, he proceeds as follows:—

"Still the operations of the enemy are going on; still going on by stratagem. The stratagem still a pretence of Reformation. But the Reformation the very reverse of what was before attempted. Instead of divesting religion of its mysteries, and reducing it to a mere philosophy in speculation, and a mere morality in practice, the plan is now to affect a great zeal for orthodoxy; to make great pretensions to an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit's influence; to alienate the minds of the people from the established clergy, by representing them as sordid worldlings; without any concern about the souls of men; indifferent to the religion which they ought to teach, and to which the laity are attached, and destitute of the Spirit of God. In many parts of the kingdom conventicles have been opened in great numbers, and congregations formed of one knows not what denomination. The pastor is often, in appearance at least, an illiterate peasant or mechanic. The congregation is visited occasionally by preachers from a distance. Sunday schools are opened in connexion with these conventicles. There is much reason to suspect that the expenses of these schools and conventicles are defrayed by associations formed in different places. For the preachers and schoolmasters are observed to engage in expenses for the support and advancement of their institutions, to which, if we may judge from appearances, their own means must be altogether inadequate. The poor are even bribed, by small pecuniary gifts from time to time, to send their children to these schools of they know not what, rather than to those connected with the established church, in which they would be bred in the prin-

and methodists, in their attempts to introduce the preaching of the gospel in villages where evangelical doctrines were not taught in the established church, were actuated by what were then termed "jacobinical" motives, and by a desire to overthrow the episcopalian form of church government. This opinion, repeatedly announced in the oracular tone too often assumed by that learned prelate, obtained an extraordinary currency; and there was every reason to fear that some strong legislative measures for the prevention of these encroachments (as they were regarded) upon the functions of a parish minister, would be adopted. The necessity of such

ciples of true religion and loyalty. It is very remarkable that these new congregations of nondescripts have been mostly formed since the Jacobins have been laid under the restraints of those two most salutary statutes commonly known by the names of the Sedition and Treason Bills; a circumstance which gives much ground for suspicion that sedition and Atheism are the real objects of these institutions, rather than religion. Indeed, in some places this is known to be the case. In one topic the teachers of all these congregations agree; abuse of the established clergy, as negligent of their flocks, cold in their preaching, and destitute of the Spirit. In this they are joined by persons of a very different caste; whom a candour of which they, on their part, set but a poor example, is unwilling to suspect of any ill design; though it is difficult to acquit them of the imputation of an indiscretion in their zeal, which, in its consequences, may be productive of mischief very remote, I believe, from their intention. It is a dreadful aggravation of the dangers of the present crisis in this country, that persons of real piety should, without knowing it, be lending their aid to the common enemy, and making themselves, in effect, accomplices in a conspiracy against the Lord and against his Christ. The Jacobins of this country, I very much fear, are, at this moment, making a tool of Methodism, just as the illuminées of Bavaria made a tool of free-masonry; while the real Methodist, like the real free-mason, is kept in utter ignorance of the wicked enterprise the counterfeit has in hand." Pp. 18—20.

In page 25, &c. the Bishop corrects a misrepresentation of a speech delivered by him in the House of Lords, and gives the following as a faithful statement of it. "I said," says he, "that schools of Jacobinical religion and Jacobinical politics; that is to say, schools of Atheism and disloyalty, abound in this country;—schools in the shape and disguise of charity;—schools and Sunday schools, in which the minds of the children of the very lowest orders are enlightened; that is to say, taught to despise religion, and the laws, and all subordination.—This I know to be the fact. But, the proper antidote for the poison of the Jacobinical schools, will be schools for children of the same class under the management of the parochial clergy:—Sunday schools, therefore, under your own inspection, I would advise you to encourage." P. 26.

measures was urged again and again, with the utmost violence and intolerance, in several of the daily and other periodical publications; so that considerable apprehensions were naturally entertained that these exertions of christian benevolence would be altogether checked, or greatly restricted.

In such a state of things Mr. Hall commenced this essay: but, the public ebullition subsiding, he relinquished his design of publication, and indeed destroyed a portion of what he had written.

In the years 1810 and 1811, the friends of village preaching by dissenters, and of Sunday schools under their superintendence, were again alarmed by a fresh attempt to restrain their operations, though not undertaken in a hostile spirit, in an act brought into parliament by Lord *Sidmouth*. His Lordship proposed some new restrictions upon persons who wished to qualify as dissenting teachers, and others, either by separate licence, or by some other method, thought to be appropriate, on itinerant preaching. He also proposed to deprive lay-preachers of certain exemptions which had hitherto been granted. Against these measures petitions were sent to parliament from all parts of the kingdom; and the bill, being opposed by Lords *Grey, Holland, Erskine, Liverpool, Moira, Stanhope,* by Dr. Manners Sutton, then *Archbishop of Canterbury,* and by *Lord Chancellor Eldon,* was lost May 21st, 1811, on the motion of Lord *Erskine,* which was agreed to without a division. The minds of those classes of the public that were interested in the diffusion of evangelical knowledge among the poor, were however, agitated by this question for several months. In such a state of things, Mr. Hall determined to revise and complete what he had formerly begun; but the failure of Lord Sidmouth's plan induced him again to lay aside his pen, and again to destroy great part of the manuscript. The portions which escaped destruction have been found since Mr. Hall's death. They want the advantage of entire continuity, as well as of the author's finishing touch; and,

being composed at distant periods, and in part evidently re-written, to suit the modification of the general purpose occasioned by the later attempts at restriction, they exhibit a slight repetition of sentiment. It has, however, been thought right to preserve the whole of them; as they unfold, and place in different lights, some valuable principles of general application.

For a full account of the proceedings on Lord Sidmouth's bill, the reader may advantageously consult "A Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Deputies appointed to protect the Civil Rights of the Protestant Dissenters."

FRAGMENT ON VILLAGE PREACHING.

. . . . . WHERE they beheld the papal power overturned, they were ready to imagine the season was approaching, so clearly foretold, when true religion should emerge from the clouds of superstition which environed her and enlightened the world. Who will say that these hopes indicated depravity in the minds of those who cherished them too fondly? It was surely not very criminal to rejoice at the prospect of the extinction of evil and the universal prevalence of justice, peace, and happiness; or to mistake "the times and seasons which the Father has put into his own power." Good men were, of all others, least likely to suspect that their hopes would be blasted by a wickedness of which the world afforded no example. But whatever of this delusion might have prevailed heretofore, the virtuous part of the public are completely recovered from it; nor has it had the smallest influence in stimulating the exertions which it is the purpose of this publication to defend.

The only shadow of argument on which Bishop Horsley founds his accusation, that village preaching has a political object, is, that it has been chiefly prevalent since the Pitt and Grenville bills, as they are styled, were passed; which put a stop to political meetings. Hence he infers that it is only a new channel into which the old stream is directed. Here, however, he is entirely mistaken. The true source of this increased activity is to be found in the missions, the first of which was established some years before the Grenville bills were passed. The attention of the religious public was strongly excited on

that occasion to the indispensable necessity of "preaching the gospel to every creature," and the result was a resolution to exert more zealous and extensive efforts to diffuse the knowledge of saving truth at home than had before been employed. Agreeable to this, it will be found, on inquiry, that those who most distinguished themselves in political debates have had the least share (if they have had any) in promoting these measures; and that the invariable effect of engaging in these plans has been to diminish the attention bestowed on political objects. This indeed could not fail to be the consequence; for as the mind is too limited to be very deeply impressed with more than one object at a time, a solicitude to promote the interests of piety, must insensibly diminish the ardour for every thing that is not necessarily involved in it; not to say that the spirit of devotion, which such designs imply and promote, is peculiarly incompatible with the violence and acrimony of political passions. He who is truly intent on promoting the eternal happiness of mankind, must look on futurity with so steady an eye, that he is in more danger of falling into indifference to the spectacle that is passing before him, than of suffering himself to be too much inflamed by it. He is under more temptation to desert his proper rank in society, to undervalue the importance of worldly activity, and to let opportunities of exertion slide through his hands, than to indulge turbulent and ambitious views.

Hence we find, in the first ages of the church, heathens made frequent complaints of the inactivity of christians, but never accused them of turbulence; and that while many fled into deserts, from austerity and devotion, not one, during the prevalence of paganism, endured the chastisement of the laws for sedition or treason. The pious of every age have been among the quiet of the land.

If our legislators are aware (as I hope they are) of the inconceivable benefits which are derived, in a political view, from the diffusion of pure and undefiled religion, no fascination of great talents or of high rank, no fear of misrepresentation or calumny, will tempt them to be

guilty of a legislative suicide, by exerting their authority to suppress it: since nothing can ever give equal efficacy to the laws or stability to the government. The law, of itself, can only address fears; religion speaks to the conscience, and commands it to respect that justice on which the law is founded. Human law can only arm itself with penalties which may be averted, despised, or endured; religion presents, in the displeasure of our Maker, an evil that can have no bounds. Human laws can only take cognizance of disorders in their last stage, proposing only the punishment of the delinquent, without attempting to prevent the crime; religion establishes a tribunal in our own breast, where that which is concealed from every other eye is arraigned, and the very embryo of crime detected and destroyed.

If we examine the sources of crimes, we shall perceive the chief temptation to violate the principle of justice and humanity, arises from a discontent with the allotments of Providence; men are apt to attach an importance to what they see another possesses. But what can be so sovereign a cure for this discontent as religion, which teaches that all things are under the disposal of infinite wisdom; that life is but a passage to an eternal condition of being; that every thing the world admires is passing away, and that he only who "doeth the will of God abideth for ever?"

Religion must infallibly promote obedience to the laws, by subduing those violent passions which give birth to crimes. As our hopes and fears must all turn on the present scene, or on futurity, it is plain that a principle which throws an infinite weight into the latter scale must greatly diminish the influence of the former. On this account, real piety must ever be an enemy to intemperate enjoyments, and to extravagant hopes. In addition to this, christianity enforces obedience to civil rulers with the utmost clearness and under the most solemn sanction, adopting the duties of a citizen into the family of religion, and commanding its disciples to revere civil government as the ordinance of God; and to be "subjeet, not chiefly for wrath, but for conscience sake." Who are so

likely to be loyal subjects as those who consider lawful princes, in the exercise of their functions, as the representatives of the Supreme Ruler, and judges as the dispensers of the portion confided to them of eternal justice? The public may be assured, that as nothing is more remote from the views of those who are most active in promoting village preaching than an intention to promote political discontent, so nothing is more removed from the practice of the preachers. That there may be an imprudent or an unprincipled individual who profanes the function of a preacher by introducing political remarks (a practice too common with those who are loudest in the condemnation of dissenters) is possible: though it has never been my lot to hear of any among our village preachers; but that such instances are extremely rare, and when they occur never fail to be discountenanced in the strongest manner, both by dissenters and methodists, may be affirmed with the utmost confidence. There is no maxim more constantly inculcated by all who have any influence in these measures. than that of scrupulously abstaining from every, even the remotest, allusion to politics. They have preached liberty indeed, but it is that liberty which Jesus Christ proclaimed at Nazareth, that holy and divine liberty with which the Son makes his followers free; not that liberty whose thrilling accents awake nations to arms, but that which is enjoyed in the highest perfection in the quiet of the sanctuary, where all is still; as in the temple of Solomon, the sound of the lifted hammer was not heard. They propose a revolution, but it is that by which men are translated from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God and his Christ. They propose great innovations, but such as consist in exhorting men to newness of heart.

His Lordship expresses his approbation of Sunday schools, provided they are placed under the inspection and control of the clergy. If the clergy will take the trouble of forming and inspecting Sunday schools, they may confer a great benefit on the public, and gain much honour to themselves: whether the nation will tamely submit to have the business of education exclusively in

the hands of any one set of men, remains to be tried. The attempt to support an ecclesiastical establishment, by invading the freedom of education, resembles more the policy of a Julian than the gentleness of Christ. To invade the freedom of charity is a stretch of tyranny still more odious. To control the movements of benevolence, and construe the impulse of compassion into a crime, is such an outrage as can only be paralleled in the darkest ages, and in the most barbarous minds. Of what crimes have the dissenters been convicted, we will boldly ask; of such infamy that even the exercise of benevolence in them must wear the aspect of guilt; and that they must be degraded, not only beneath the rights of citizens, but the possibilities of virtue? What have these helots of England done to deserve this more than Spartan cruelty? In the name of eternal justice, I invoke the injured majesty of our common nature to repel an attack so injurious, founded on aspersions so foul and detestable.

It is asserted that these revolutionary designs are carried on under pretences of superior piety. It is matter of accusation, that the dissenters make these pretences. If the dissenters, however, profess to have more piety than the members of the established church, it will be shrewdly suspected to arise from a very plain reason, namely, that they have more. Hypocrisy is the vice of individuals, not of numerous bodies of men, who can have no motive sufficiently extensive in its operation to engage them to submit to its restraints. The same conclusion results from another consideration. Nothing but a conscientious preference can, generally speaking, incline a man to a mode of religious profession which in the mildest times is unpopular, and at some seasons not exempt from danger and disgrace. Without contending for any superiority in the principles of dissent, the very circumstance of becoming a dissenter, or of continuing such, at some expense of worldly reputation and advantage, indicates a mind over which religious considerations have great influence. They who never scarcely think of religion at all, or who abandon themselves to the tide of opinion and fashion, are safely conducted into the haven

of the established church. To be content with merely being tolerated, instead of sharing the honours and emoluments of an opulent establishment, to have all the avenues which lead to greatness shut against them, is a sacrifice which nothing but conscientious piety, however mistaken, can prompt them to make. In addition to which, it may be remarked, that a religious minority, from a conviction that their conduct will be exposed to a severe scrutiny, and that nothing can sustain them against the contempt of the world but superior correctness of morals, have a motive for cherishing the spirit of their institution which others want.

On these accounts it will not, we hope, be deemed presumptuous if we take it for granted, that the dissenters, and especially that class of them who have signalized their zeal for the religious instruction of the poor, have really more piety than falls to the share of the great body of the people of England. But how is it now possible for pious men to enter into a conspiracy to overturn the constitution of their country, and to overwhelm every thing in anarchy? For this purpose they must unite themselves intimately with the infidel faction; they must make common cause with those detestable monsters whose pestilential breath has blasted, in other countries every thing cheering to the eye or refreshing to the heart. They must forget the infinite contrariety of principle which divides them; they must forget the daggers of these assassins, which, after destroying their enemies they never fail to turn against their associates, impelled by an insatiable eagerness for destruction. They must put their fortune, their character, their life, in the hands of men with whom it would not be safe to trust themselves in a room. There is nothing more opposite than the spirit of piety and the spirit of faction. There enters into the composition of faction, a meddlesome and mischievous activity, blended with a callousness of heart; devotion softens the temper. Faction knows no delicacy in the choice of its society: it wants no other qualities in its associates than turbulence and discontent, a conscience which no crimes can startle, and an impudence

which no detection can confront: devotion, alarmed at wickedness, and disgusted with folly, is apt to carry the principle of selection too far. Faction delights in scenes of tumult and noise; devotion in solitude and retirement. Faction busies itself with forming external movements, and values itself only on the change it produces in the situation of external objects; the treasures and conquests of religion are internal. Faction draws its nourishment from an overweening conceit of superior wisdom, accompanied with a proportionable contempt of the under standing and virtue of other men. The solid foundation of piety is laid in humility, or a deep conviction of our sinfulness and fallibility. I will not say that men of real piety have never been betrayed into factious enterprises; or have not, on some occasions, pushed their opposition to government too far; but it may be safely affirmed, that whenever they have done so, it must have arisen from an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances; generally from the oppression which makes a wise man mad; that it is most foreign to their genuine character, and that nothing is a more effectual antidote to political turbulence than the prevalence of piety.

Before we proceed further, I must be permitted to lament that propensity to credit and propagate the most hideous calumnies, which seems to have arisen to an unprecedented height in this age. It may answer a temporary purpose, but it is well if it does not recoil on those who employ it. It resembles the policy of insurrections and riots, which, though they may occasionally punish or crush an obnoxious sect, no wise government will adopt, for fear of a reaction. To fill the minds of the public with hatred, jealousies, and suspicions, is to poison the fountains of public security. When this spirit is once awakened among a people, the character and conduct of its rulers seldom fail, in the long run, to be injured by it. Under disasters which the utmost wisdom cannot prevent, under burdens which the strictest economy may impose, government presents a plain, a palpable, and permanent pretext of discontent and suspicion. Misery finds a sort of relief in attribu-

ting its sufferings to the conduct of others, and while it soothes its anguish by resentment and clamour, it fastens on the object that first presents itself. This object will naturally be the rulers of the nation. Nor is there any thing with respect to which men are more liable to be mistaken, than the share which the imprudence or misconduct of civil government has in the production of public calamities. So various, so subtle, so complicated in their operation are the causes which conduct to prosperity or decline in the affairs of nations, that it is a matter of the utmost delicacy to determine what share is to be assigned to human agency, and what to contingencies and events. This obscurity furnishes infinite scope for the exercise of candour in the well disposed, and for the indulgence of suspicion and discontent in the factious. In scenes so complicated, and when the steps are so numerous and so untraceable between the first movement and the last, it is equally difficult to form a right estimate of events, when we are very remote, or when we are very near them. If we attempt to survey a remote æra, we are lost in naked generalities; when we turn our eyes on the scene before us, our attention is apt to be limited to detached parts; we are apt to confound proximate with remote causes, to mistake casual coincidence for natural connexion, and to give a disproportionate importance to whatever we immediately feel. Let them who have any doubt of the dreadful effects of calumny, look at what took place in France, where they will find it was the principal engine employed by the Brissotines to overturn the monarchy, and afterwards by Robespierre to deluge that devoted country with blood. By inspiring everlasting jealousies and unbounded fears, he contrived to extirpate every remain of tenderness and pity, and to preserve the minds of the people in constant agitation, like the sea in a storm. It was this that whetted the daggers of assassins. It was the withering blast of this spirit that destroyed every thing amiable and noble in that unhappy kingdom, resigned to the desolating sway of selfishness and revenge. Nothing can be more fatal to

public repose; nothing can tend more immediately to quicken the seeds of convulsion. That this malignant leaven should be infused into the public mind by any hands, must be matter of deep regret; that it should be mingled and prepared by those hands from which the world is wont to look for benedictions and blessings, seems awful and portentous.

Let not this, however, be understood to intimate that there is any room to apprehend the dissenters may be provoked to verify the suspicions and calumnies to which they are incessantly exposed. The writer would be understood to speak merely of the tendency of such infusions on the nation at large; not at all of their influence on the dissenters or methodists. Their loyalty is of too fine a texture to be affected by the efflux or influx of public opinion. While they enjoyed the countenance of the public, their loyalty was sustained by a higher motive than popularity, nor will any discouragement tempt them to forfeit it. In the mean time they place a firm reliance, first on the protection of Heaven, the judge of their innocence, next on the impartial justice and parental kindness of their gracious sovereign, to prevent them from being overwhelmed and swallowed up by the reproaches of their enemies.

Enough has been said on this head, I trust, to satisfy every unprejudiced person, that nothing is more remote from the design of these institutions than the promotion of seditious or revolutionary plans.

It is time to proceed to a distinct charge, which is that of hostility to the church of England. It is confidently asserted by the prelate, to whom we have so often had occasion to allude, that it is the constant practice of itinerant preachers to calumniate the clergy, by representing them as a set of hirelings, destitute of the spirit of piety, and utterly indifferent to the welfare of their flocks; by which artifices they alienate the affections of the people from the established pastors, and prepare them for becoming dissenters; or what, in the dialect of the learned prelate, is the same thing, schismatics.

Although it is extremely disagreeable to be obliged to

contradict a positive assertion in a manner equally positive, yet truth compels us on this occasion to declare, that the statement here made is without any sort of foundation in truth. The practice of vilifying the established clergy is so far from being commonly adopted in the discourses, either of dissenters or methodists, that it may be safely affirmed, if there are any instances of conduct so highly improper, they are extremely rare, and that where the dissenters offend in this particular once, the established clergy are guilty of it ten times. It is a practice which the late Mr. Wesley discouraged, in his connexion, to the utmost; nor are the dissenters, as a body, less scrupulous and delicate on that head. Still, however, it will be said, a principle of hostility to the established church seems inseparable from these exertions; the tendency of preaching in the parishes of authorized ministers must be to alienate the people from the established mode of worship, and, in the issue, to endanger the existence of the national church.

As this objection wears a more plausible appearance than any other, and has been urged in a great variety of forms, the author must beg the patience of the reader, while he gives it a full and distinct examination.

1. The objection we are considering seems to imply, on the part of those who urge it, an inattention to the true genius and design of a religious establishment. We must distinguish between the design of religion itself, and the design of that support which is given to it by human laws. The design of religion itself is to discipline the mind and prepare the heart for the happiness of heaven. The design of supporting a particular form of religion by law, is much less extensive; it is to derive from it that security which it never fails to confer on the interests of civil society. This may be termed the indirect benefit of religion; with a view to which the policy of legislation has thought it right to incorporate it with human laws. The establishment of a religion is not to be considered as a final end. In respect to importance it is never to be confounded with religion, or even to be

placed on a level with the peace and good order of society, to which it ought ever to be in perfect subordination. It aims at nothing farther than to secure such a prevalence of religion as shall make men conscientious and upright. By whatever means this is accomplished, the true design of every religious establishment is answered. From the indisposition of mankind to direct their thoughts to a futurity; from their proneness to immerse themselves in present and sensible objects; and the ignorance which follows of course, it has been thought necessary to set apart a particular order of men to inculcate its truths, and to exemplify its duties. Laws will not be obeyed, harmony in society cannot be maintained, without virtue; virtue cannot subsist without religion. The sentiments of religion, it is thought, will be effaced from the mind by the influence of worldly passions and pursuits, unless it is recognized by the sovereign, and public teachers appointed by the state.

Whoever attends to this, must perceive that the establishment was intended, not to correct an excess, but to supply a defect; not to prevent men from becoming too devout, but to preserve them from falling into irreligion and vice. It was not because men are too much disposed to be religious, but because they are too apt to forget it, that our forefathers thought proper to give it a legal establishment. On a similar principle, universities were established, and colleges endowed, to stimulate literary ardour, and facilitate the means of acquiring knowledge; and not that it might be made a crime to receive instruction in any other place. If peculiar privileges and honours were conferred on these seminaries, it was not with a view to limit, confine, and discourage, but to animate the exertions of literary talent. If they seemed to narrow the stream, it was only with a view to deepen the current.

To attempt to restrain the prevalence of religion, to suppress the efforts of good men for the promotion of piety, under pretence of guarding the established church, is to lose sight of the design of all religion, and to

counteract the purpose for which the establishment of it in particular was made. It would be to found the security of the church on the ruins of religion.

2. They who urge the objection seem not to have reflected sufficiently on the prodigious advantages which the church of England possesses for securing its existence and prosperity. The large portion of property it holds gives it a great national weight and importance. The regular gradations of authority and rank cement its several parts closely together, and prepare it on all occasions to act with the utmost promptitude and unanimity. Its ministers, vested with legal authority and character, are the natural objects of a veneration, of which nothing but personal misbehaviour can deprive them.

Mankind are apt to be strongly prejudiced in favour of whatever is countenanced by antiquity, enforced by authority, and recommended by custom. The pleasure of acquiescing in the decision of others is by most men so much preferred to the toil and hazard of inquiry, and so few are either able or disposed to examine for themselves, that the voice of law will generally be taken for the dictates of justice.

Nor is it the weakness only of mankind that inclines them to look with a favourable eye on what is established; some of the most amiable propensities of the heart lean the same way,—deference to superior wisdom and to great names; the love of quiet, and the dread of confusion and disorder. These considerations will prevail over minds which are too virtuous to be moved by a gross self-interest. Further, the religion of the state will ever be the religion of the vain and aspiring. A degree of ridicule never fails to be attached to a religious minority. In all the efforts of churchmen, their movements are facilitated by the current of public opinion, while dissenters are on every occasion obstructed by public prejudice. Thus churchmen set out with a partiality on their side, which nothing but neglect and misconduct can destroy; dissenters, with a weight of suspicion and dislike, which nothing but discreet and exemplary behaviour can remove.

If we contemplate, in connexion with the subject we are upon, the manners and institutions of the British nation, we shall perceive that the established church in these kingdoms possesses such pledges of its safety, as are not to be found in any protestant community besides. A finished English education is, in all its stages, clerical; the public seminaries of instruction, together with the two universities, being almost entirely under the conduct of ecclesiastics; by which means a reverence for the church is imbibed with the first elements of knowledge. Its splendid literary establishments, its magnificent libraries, the accumulation of ages, and, above all, the great and illustrious names it has produced in every department of genius and of learning, the glory of the world; who have conferred dignity, not so much on their profession as on their species; gives it, in a literary view, a decided superiority, and in popular opinion an exclusive esteem. The policy of modern times has, in addition to this, confided to its ministers more and more of the administration of the laws, in which they are become the immediate organs of justice to the people; and the claims of spiritual authority are hence enforced by the habits of civil submission.

Freed from the fetters of celibacy, which, if they augment its zeal, must narrow its influence in popish countries, it strikes its roots deep into the social soil, and forms numerous alliances, so that there is scarcely a considerable family in the nation which is not immediately interested in its support. A popish clergy, secluded from the enjoyments of domestic life, may be expected, indeed, to have a more eager ambition for the advancement of their order, in consequence of their passions being all directed to one point; but as their manners must be less amiable, so, from this insulated condition, they are liable to fall without a struggle and without pity. They are a loose appendage of the state, not a part of its growth and substance. With respect to the English clergy it is quite otherwise. As they are continually receiving supplies from the mass of the community, so they are continually restoring to it, in the persons

of their sons and daughters, what it has lost. By these means a continual communication is maintained with the body of the people, manners are assimilated, and the ties of tenderness and attachment extended. The gradations of rank, also, which are established in it, contribute to the same purpose, and exhibit an image of the political constitution planted in every corner of the kingdom, and mingled with every order of the state; while its inferior members propagate its influence among the commonalty, it allies itself on the side of its dignitaries with all that is august, basks in the smile of monarchs, and shares in the splendour of courts.

A society which has such numerous pledges for its security, which so many motives concur to favour, so many passions to support, must be guilty of some extraordinary misconduct before it can forfeit the attachment of the people. It is evident it can only fall under the weight of its own abuses.

3. It is possible, indeed, to conceive a degree of secularity and dissipation which may first greatly impair its influence, and finally endanger its existence. In an age not remarkable for credulity or superstition, as the conduct of ecclesiastics will have more weight than their pretensions, nothing can long secure them from popular contempt, but exemplary morals and diligence.

To invest idleness and dissipation with the privileges of laborious piety, is an impracticable attempt. For by a constitution more ancient than that of any priesthood, superior degrees of sanctity and of exertion will gain superior esteem as their natural reward. We must not wonder to find the public forget the reverence due to the sacred profession, when its members forget the spirit, and neglect the duties, on which that reverence was founded. The natural equity of mankind will not suffer the monopoly of contradictory goods. If the people are expected to reverence an order, it must be from the consciousness of benefits received. If the clergy claim authority, it must be accompanied with a solicitude for the spiritual interest of their flocks, and [that pastoral] labour [be well] sustained. To enjoy,

at once, both honour and ease, never fell to the share of any profession. If the clergy neglect their charge, if they conform to the spirit of the world, and engage with eagerness in the pursuits of ambition, or of pleasure, it will be impossible for any human policy to preserve them from sinking in the public esteem.

4. As far as the attachment of the people to their established ministers is diminished in consequence of misconduct on their part, it will not be remedied by excluding other instructors. To deprive them of every other means of information may make them heathens, but will not make them churchmen. The established ministers are either equal to others in zeal and diligence, or inferior. If they are equally laborious and exemplary, what have they to fear, while they have every advantage in their possession which superior learning, a legal character, and the countenance of their superiors can confer? To assert that the same degree of diligence and piety in a clergyman will not produce an equal effect as when they are exerted by a dissenter, is to yield the cause of the establishment at once; for it is to affirm that there is a source of weakness in the very nature of an establishment, which prevents equal means in other respects from being equally influential; an extraordinary assertion, which the friends of the established church would be, we should suppose, the last to make. The policy of an establishment is founded on a supposition, that it is the most effectual mode of inculcating some degree of religion, and of impressing sentiments of piety on the minds of men. But if, on the contrary, it be found that exertions merely equal made in any other form produce more powerful effects, that supposition is invalidated, and the structure raised upon it falls to the ground. To give religion a legal subsistence, it seems, by this reasoning, is so far from arming it with superior energy, that it is, of all the modes under which it can appear, the most disadvantageous, and ignorance and fanaticism gain an easy triumph over it.

If the other supposition be taken, that the established

ministers are inferior to others in diligence and exertion, and that on this account their popularity is endangered; to give them the monopoly of religious instruction is to violate every principle of reason and equity. It is punishing the innocent for the faults of the guilty. It is to reward a breach of trust with an enlargement of power. Instead of quickening indolence, or correcting abuse, it is conferring impunity on both. The natural remedy for whatever inconveniences are experienced or apprehended from established abuses, is the institution of discipline and the exercise of wholesome correction by the rulers of the church, who are invested with adequate power for that purpose. To look out and ask for an external force to repel the consequences of an inward disease; to demand the interposition of the legislature to protect them from the effects of their own abuses, while they refuse the proper remedy, is repugnant to every maxim of justice. They ought at least to wait until the abuses they complain of are remedied; until the internal resources of reformation are employed. With little propriety or grace can they complain of impertinent intruders, who are inattentive to the duties of their allotted station. In the report of the Lincolnshire clergy,* it is frankly acknowledged that much of the decline of religion is to be imputed to the neglect of the clergy; and yet, almost in the same breath, they express a desire that the legislature would give them power to expel intruders from their parishes. It has usually been expected that superior claims should be founded, at least, on the pretence of superior merits. But here the order of things is reversed. At the very moment they are asking for an increase of power, they confess themselves unworthy of it, by having abused, or neglected to employ, the power already intrusted into their hands. Not content to escape without punishment, they ask to be rewarded for a breach of ecclesiastical trust, and the want of clerical virtues. Whatever we may think of

* Circulated in 1801 or 1802.—Ed

their delicacy, we cannot but commend their prudence, in not putting their names to such a paper.

5. It deserves to be considered what effect the prohibition of other instruction is likely to have on the conduct of the clergy themselves. Is it likely to diminish or increase the frequency of non-residence, or the extent of secular and dissipated habits? Will it tend to augment their professional diligence and zeal, the surest support of an ecclesiastical order? Will the monopoly of religious instruction fail to produce the effect of all other monopolies? While men are accustomed to compare rival pretensions; while emulation continues to be classed among human passions, these questions will admit but of one answer. A generous competition is the animating spirit of every profession, without which it droops and languishes. If we look around us, we shall perceive that all the discoveries which have enriched science, and the improvements which have embellished life, are to be ascribed to the competition of nations with nations, of cities with cities, and of men with men. From causes too obvious to need explanation, there is less of this spirit in the clerical profession than in any other; which is the principal reason of the talent of preaching having been so little cultivated.

It is easy to see, then, what will be the consequence of extinguishing the small remains of emulation or jealousy, call it by what name you please, which springs from the complete toleration of a diversity of sects. If the dread of intrusion (as it is called) into their parishes is not sufficient to prevent some from neglecting their pastoral duties, this neglect will be much more profound when there is nothing to disturb their repose. When the minister fears no rival, and the people despair of any remedy, the inattention of the one and the ignorance of the other will increase in equal proportion.

The Impolicy of Intolerance.

There is another objection frequently urged against village preaching, which will deserve our attention. It is alleged that the gross fanaticism which distinguishes the self-appointed teachers of religion tends to bring christianity into contempt, and threatens the most serious mischief to the cause of enlightened piety. That fanaticism is an evil, and that a considerable portion of it may frequently be blended with those efforts to revive religion for which we are pleading, will not be denied. A little reflection, however, may convince us that the danger from this quarter is not so alarming as might be apprehended at first sight.

Fanaticism, as far as we are at present concerned with it, may be defined such an overwhelming impression of the ideas relating to the future world as disqualifies for the duties of life.

1. From the very nature of fanaticism it is an evil of short duration. As it implies an irregular movement, or an inflamed state of the passions, when these return to their natural state it subsides. Nothing that is violent will last long. The vicissitudes of the world, and the business of life, are admirably adapted to abate the excesses of religious enthusiasm. In a state where there are such incessant calls to activity, where want presses, desire allures, and ambition inflames, there is little room to dread an excessive attention to the objects of an invisible futurity.

A few rare examples of this kind might perhaps be found, by diligent inquiry, over which infidelity would triumph and piety drop a tear. It is not uncommon, however, to find those who, at the commencement of their religious course, have betrayed symptoms of enthusiasm, become in the issue the most amiable characters. With the increase of knowledge, the intemperate ardour of their zeal has subsided into a steady faith and fervent charity, so as to exemplify the promise of scripture, that the "path of the just" shall be "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." As the energy of the religious principle is exerted in overcoming the world; so that variety of action and enlarged experience which the business of life supplies, serves to correct its excesses and restrain its aberrations.

There are some who, proscribing the exercise of the affections entirely in religion, would reduce christianity to a mere rule of life; but as such persons betray an extreme ignorance of human nature, as well as of the Scriptures, I shall content myself with remarking, that the apostles, had they lived in the days of these men, would have been as little exempt from their ridicule as any other itinerants. If the supreme love of God, a solicitude to advance his honour, ardent desires after happiness, together with a comparative deadness to the present state, be enthusiasm, it is that enthusiasm which animated the Saviour, and breathes throughout the Scriptures.

2. In admitting that a portion of enthusiasm may possibly be blended with the efforts to revive serious religion alluded to, we are far from meaning to insinuate that that is their distinguishing character; or that those who exert themselves in that way can, as a body, be justly classed with fanatics. The far greater part are men of good natural sense united to fervent piety. If not possessed of the advantages of a learned education, they are by no means ignorant. They have living knowledge. Familiarly conversant with the Bible, they are men of devotional habits, and of exemplary conduct. The insulting epithets applied to such men might naturally provoke retaliation, and lead to an inquiry how far the learning, so ostentatiously displayed, is connected with religious knowledge; when it would perhaps be found that some of their revilers are better able to solve a geometrical problem than a theological difficulty, and are better acquainted with the epistles of Horace than those of St. Paul. But, as it is my wish strenuously to avoid whatever might awaken angry passions, I forbear to press these inquiries.

Enthusiasm is an evil much less to be dreaded than

superstition. The latter is a disease of opinion, which may be transmitted with fresh accumulation of error from age to age. It is the spirit of slumber in which whole nations are immersed. Placing religion, which is most foreign to its nature, in depending for acceptance with God on absurd penances or unmeaning ceremonies, it resigns the understanding to ignorance and the heart to insensibility. No generous sentiments, no active virtues, ever issue from superstition.

Superstition is the disease of nations, enthusiasm that of individuals; the former grows more inveterate by time, the latter is cured by it.

We hope the remembrance of popish cruelties is not so far effaced from the minds of our countrymen as to permit them to see the forge of the giant without terror.

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On Toleration.

We have arrived at the last part of our subject, which relates to the expediency and justice of legal interference in the suppression of these attempts. And here I feel a solicitude lest I should give a wrong touch to the ark of religious liberty, and injure the cause which I wish to promote.

1. Toleration of a diversity of worship has now been legally established and uninterruptedly practised for more than a century; during which we have enjoyed a degree of internal peace and prosperity unexampled in any former age. This, which was the thing most wanted to perfect the constitution, has softened and harmonized the spirits of men, has mitigated the fierceness of religious factions, and has made them of one heart and mind in the love of their country and attachment to its sovereign. The national wealth has been augmented, commerce extended, arts invented or improved, and society embellished with an additional portion of elegance and humanity. The resources of public strength have been enlarged, and the nation has become more formidable in

war and more respected in peace. The struggles of party produce no other effects than clamorous invective and intrigue; and public rumour, instead of being occupied with the horrors of civil commotion, announces the intelligence of the fall of the ministry, or some new arrangement in the cabinet. This toleration has materially advanced the interest of the established church itself, by abating the acrimony of its adversaries, and affording room for the display of talent in other communities, the surest prevention of indolence in its own.

The principles of toleration also harmonize with that refinement of thinking and spirit of research which has distinguished the last century; in consequence of which this important advantage has been reaped, that the opinions of the speculative, which always have ultimately great effect, coincide with the practice of the constitution. Hence it is that England may be considered as the native soil of bold original minds; nor is there any danger of our being reasoned into a dislike of the constitution.

And shall we endanger the loss of all these advantages by adopting a new course of policy? What security will they afford us, who invites to tread in new and perilous paths? What security will they afford us, that the same tranquillity and the same prosperity will accompany us in so great a change; when the very essence of the constitution shall have been altered, and the very words which Englishmen were proud to pronounce expunged from the vocabulary?

A dread of innovation has hitherto prevented the correction of some flagrant abuses; yet it is rather extraordinary that some of those who profess to have most of that dread are among the most clamorous for an innovation in the toleration act.

But is not this a most serious innovation? Must we then understand these men to mean that they are only enemies to such innovations as are on the side of liberty, and that they are prepared to trample on the most fundamental laws, to promote persecution and tyranny? With such men it is to little purpose to expostulate; we leave them to the enjoyment of that calm sunshine

which must fill the hearts of men of so must purity and benevolence.

To others it may be proper to suggest, that if innovations are dangerous, they are not equally so, and that there is a great difference betwixt innovations which favour the spirit of a constitution, and those that contradict it. The former may be compared to the natural growth of the human body, the latter to the violent dismemberment of its parts. The former completes an imperfect analogy; the latter destroys just proportions. The former is the removal of an obstruction which prevents the equable motion of the machine; the latter occasions the collision of interfering principles. When oppressive laws are engrafted on a free constitution, the contrast of liberty and tyranny will make the oppression to be doubly felt. In such a situation, the free and undaunted spirit which the constitution has cherished suffers violence. The precedents of past times, the examples of their ancestors, the fundamental principles of the constitution, have taught them to consider themselves as free. By the proposed laws they are instructed to look upon themselves in a new light. They are commanded to unlearn all that they have learned, to descend from the dignity of freemen to the abject condition of a slave. Slavery may exist where freedom is unknown, without endangering the public tranquillity: in some countries perhaps without destruction of public happiness. But the slightest invasion of the liberties of a free country awakens a jealousy and resentment which are not easily appeased. Let those then who are alarmed at the danger of innovation, seriously reflect on the possible consequences of an innovation so momentous. A free and a despotic state may both be compatible with liberty; but who ever would voluntarily make the transition from one to the other?

2. The liberty of worshipping God in that manner which the conscience of every individual dictates, provided nothing be introduced into worship incompatible with good morals, may be justly claimed as an inalienable right. The relation which subsists betwixt man and

his Maker, and the consequent obligation to worship him, is prior to the civil relation between magistrates and subjects. It is a more important relation, since all the good a creature can enjoy is derived from it, and all his reasonable hopes of happiness on the goodness of the Almighty. It differs, too, from every other, in that it is invisible, perpetual, and eternal. A man may or may not be the member of a civil community, but he is always the creature of God. For these reasons, political duties, or those which result from the relation of the subject to the prince, must, in their nature, be subordinate to religious. When the commands of a civil superior interfere with those which we conscientiously believe to be the laws of God, submission to the former must be criminal; for the two obligations are not equipollent, but the former is essential, invariable, and paramount to every other: "Whether it be right," said the apostles, "to obey God or man, judge ye." But if an active obedience in such circumstances be *criminal*, to prescribe it cannot be *innocent*, since it would be absurd to affirm that exercise of authority to be right to which it is wrong to submit. Rights and duties are correlatives. A right to command necessarily implies the enforcing that which is right with respect to those to whom the duty of submission belongs. Nor is it to any purpose to allege that the worship prescribed is rational and scriptural, and far more excellent than that which is prohibited. For if we remember that worship is no other than the outward expression of the love and fear of God, we must perceive, that to become acceptable, it is above all things necessary that it be such as approves itself to the mind of the worshipper; such as he sincerely believes will be pleasing to God. It is impossible to please God without a sincere intention to please him. We may hope, from him who knows our frame, for a merciful indulgence to the imperfections which spring from involuntary ignorance or latent prejudice. It agrees with his benignity to suppose he will graciously accept that worship which is not the best in itself, providing it be the best we know how to present. But to

worship with those rites and ceremonies which our conscience does not approve, however excellent in themselves, is an insult to the Deity. A Jew, for example, who joined in the worship of a christian church, while he retained the incredulity which distinguishes his nation, would be guilty of the highest impiety; nor would it be any extenuation of his fault to allege that the worship in which he assisted was founded on scripture, and commanded by God, while his conviction was contrary. He who is utterly careless of the favour of God, and without any solicitude respecting a future world, will naturally follow the stream of authority or fashion, and adopt any mode of religion which happens to have the ascendency. But the sincere worshipper of God will find it impossible to comply with any religious injunctions which appear to him to interfere with the will of God.

Besides, as is urged with great force by Mr. Locke, if the magistrate of one country has a right to impose his religion under pains and penalties, the magistrates of all other countries must have an equal right. Religious truth will vary with the boundaries of nations; and with equal justice the Pope will be revered in Spain, Mahomet in Turkey, and Brahma in India. It is easy to see to what those principles tend, which imply that there is nothing determinate, nothing sacred in religion, and that all modes of worship are equally pleasing to God, and equally useful. The principles of persecution, pushed to their just consequence, terminate in Hobbism.*

It is worth while to consider what is likely to be the effect of enacting coercive laws in religion. If the men at whom they are aimed are conscientious they will still persevere. They will reply to the injunction of silence, what the apostles did to the chief priest, "whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye." They will still persist in their attempts to evangelize the poor. This

* It is curious that Mr. Hall and his distinguished friend Sir James Macintosh, should, unknown to each other, at different times and by a different course, arrive at a coincident result not likely to occur to ordinary minds. Sir James, in his valuable "Preliminary Dissertation,' Ency. Britan. p. 319, says, "A Hobbist is the only consistent persecutor."—Ed.

will necessitate the exercise of greater severities, the failure of which will be considered as a demand for punishments still heavier, until the magistrate has proceeded to banishment, confiscation, and death. For it is the inconvenience attending persecution, that it is necessarily progressive. Small punishments only irritate. It commences with an intention of suppressing error; baffled in its first attempt, and stung with disappointment, it soon loses sight of its original design; it soon degenerates into a settled resolution to subdue contumacy, and strike terror. It becomes a fearful struggle betwixt power and fortitude; the power of inflicting suffering, and that of enduring, which shall wear the other out. Let those, then, who are advocates for coercive measures, not content themselves with contemplating those mild expedients which may first present themselves to their minds, but prepare for the consequences, and lay their account with being impelled to the exercise of the last severities. Let them expect to see dungeons crammed with prisoners, and scaffolds streaming with blood. Will any thing but the most unremitting vigilance, the most unrelenting system of espionage, prevent every class of dissenters and methodists from fleeing from such a country, and seeking an asylum in a foreign land?

It is not easy to conceive the wound which this will inflict on the population and prosperity of the empire. That the dissenters are, as a body, an industrious and sober people, their enemies will not deny; and that the commercial prosperity of a country is closely involved in the preservation of such a class of people is equally undeniable. The loss sustained by France in the exile of a million of protestants, by the repeal of the edict of Nantes, has never yet been repaired. Nor was there ever a period when the hazarding such a loss would be more impolitic than the present; when the flourishing state of trade and commerce is essential to the stability of the government, and in a manner to the national existence. For the diminution of revenue, and the disorganization which a considerable failure in the produce of the taxes would occasion, we shall meet with a miserable

compensation in a forced and hypocritical uniformity in worship.

> "Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis
> Tempus eget."——
>
> *Virgil.*

Will they, whose pride and violence have produced this, be able to remedy the mischief? Will lofty pretensions to unity, will tragic declamations on the sin of schism, and abandoning dissenters to the uncovenanted mercies of God?

The consequences of such an event deserve also to be considered in another point of view. It surely requires but little candour to acknowledge that the deprivations and discredit to which dissenters are exposed, make it probable that, however in the judgement of their opponents they are erroneous, they are at least conscientious. Whatever may be imagined of the caprice, the levity, or obstinacy of individuals, nothing but a sense of duty, it may be fairly presumed, could prevail on numerous bodies of men to place themselves in that situation. In every country, it is no impeachment of the national establishment to suppose that many of those who continue out of its pale, and decline its emoluments, are men of serious piety. If we may form any conjecture of the dissenters of the present day from those of former times, it is obvious that my last remark will apply to them with peculiar force. As the loss of virtue is the greatest loss a nation can sustain, so the expulsion of those who have been distinguished by possessing a superior degree of piety is an ill omen, an alarming advance towards a general corruption of morals. Men of true piety, in whatever communities they are found, "are the salt of the earth." Their example corroborates the sentiments of virtue, and preserves from degradation the standard of morals. Vice, naturally mean and cowardly, is abashed and confounded before the majesty of virtue. The efficacy of good examples in the formation of public opinion is incalculable. Though men justify their conduct by reasons, and sometimes bring the very rules of virtue to the touchstone of abstraction, yet they principally act from example. Metaphysical reasons have, in reality, had as little to do in the formation of morals, as rules of grammar in the original structure of language, or those of criticism in the formation of orators and poets.

But if the influence of example is so extensive, and if it be admitted that the dissenters, as a body, are exemplary for industry, sobriety, and a serious sense of religion, the sacrifice of so large a portion of national virtue must be confessed to be an evil of the first magnitude; to say nothing of the justice of the divine administration, which is wont to make the departure of the pious from among a people the signal for pouring out its vials upon guilty cities and nations. Though such an event is alarming at all times, yet the peculiar complexion of the present renders it more so than ever. To every impartial observer it must be obvious that the present times are distinguished by an unexampled relaxation of manners; or such levity and indifference to every thing serious, as threatens an open revolt from christianity. That rapacity and luxury, a love of pleasure, together with an open disdain for the duties of religion, have rapidly advanced within the last twenty years, can as little be denied.

And is this a season in which we can safely sacrifice a large portion of public virtue and piety? I am aware that the dissenters are considered as a precise and narrow-minded people, whose minds have not expanded with the growing improvements of the age, and that not a little ridicule has attached to them on that account: but may not this unyielding austerity, and these recluse manners, be a useful corrective to the dissipation of the age? While the polished manners of one class of society contribute to its embellishment, may not the severer virtues of another be equally beneficial in affording it stability and strength? Refinement may point the spire, but they are the plain principles of virtue which alone form the basis of the social fabric.

It will not be thought a digression from the present subject to remark the consequences which followed in

France from the repeal of the edict of Nantes; to which the measures in question bear a strong resemblance. By that event France deprived herself of a million of her most industrious subjects, who carried their industry, their arts, and their riches into other countries. The loss which her trade and manufactures sustained by this event was, no doubt, prodigious. But it is not in that view my subject leads me to consider the ill consequences of that step. She lost a people whose simple, frugal manners, and whose conscientious piety, were well adapted to stem the growing corruption of the times, while the zeal and piety of their pastors were a continual stimulus to awaken the exertions of the national clergy.

If France had never had her Saurins, her Claudes, her De Plessis Mornays, her national church had never boasted the genius of Bossuet and the virtues of Fenelon. From the fatal moment she put a period to the toleration of the protestants, the corruptions of the clergy, the abuses of the church, the impiety of the people, met with no check, till infidelity of the worst sort pervaded and ruined the nation. When the remote as well as immediate effects of that edict which suppressed the protestants are taken into the account; when we consider the careless security and growing corruption which hung over the gallican church in consequence of it, it will not be thought too much to affirm that, to that measure may be traced the destruction of the monarchy and the ruin of the nation.

He who considers what it is that constitutes the force of penal laws, will find it is their agreement with the moral feelings which nature has planted in the breast. When the actions they punish are such, and only such, as the tribunal of conscience has already condemned, they are the constant object of respect and reverence. They enforce and corroborate the principles of moral order, by publishing its decisions and executing its sanctions. They present to the view of mankind an august image of a moral administration,—a representation in miniature of the eternal justice which presides in the dispensations of the Almighty. We behold nothing of

the passions of men; we forget their agency, and seem to see nothing but justice and order appearing for a moment on the earth, to restore the tranquillity, and correct the disorders, of society. The sentiments of morality and the sanctions of law maintain, in such a situation, a reciprocal influence over each other. The former derive additional authority from public opinion, and the latter appear sacred and venerable in consequence of their coincidence with the dictates of conscience. When criminal law thus concurs with the maxims of private morality, by corroborating the dictates of conscience, and inspiring the love of justice, tranquillity, and order, and the advancement of the public good, every innocent person becomes interested in maintaining their authority and promoting their execution. Every sentiment of the mind, the sense of security, the love of the public, the sentiment of justice, the abhorrence of crime, are leagued on the side of the laws, and are so many securities for their due execution. It has been found by experience, as the result of these principles, that laws become feeble and relaxed, not only when they punish innocent objects, but when the punishments they assign are disproportionate to the offence. The want of harmony betwixt the decision of the public and the private tribunal interposes an invariable obstruction to their observance; for crimes must be detected and punishments inflicted by men who will not lend their aid to enforce what they secretly condemn. Hence laws which are enacted with precipitance and passion, or under the influence of party motives, when they come to be executed will have to encounter a perpetual friction, arising from their repugnance to the manners and sentiments of the public. By these means public opinion, which is nothing but the aggregate of the sentiments of individuals, often limits, happily for mankind, the assumed omnipotence of legislation. They are framed in one element, they are executed in another; they must live in a different atmosphere from that in which they are born.

But admitting that the efforts of zeal and the vigilance of government supply this defect, and secure the punish-

ment of those who transgress these laws, it deserves to be considered in what manner their punishment will impress the public. With what feelings will they contemplate the ruin or imprisonment of virtuous men for the exercise of what they esteem the rights of conscience? Will the condign punishment of their countrymen, not for disturbing the public peace, or for the violation of property, but for a well-meant endeavour to diffuse the principles of piety and the blessings of religion, augment their reverence for the laws; or rather will it not produce, in some an indignation against such flagrant injustice, in others confuse the distinction of right and wrong? When they see atrocious crimes and eminent virtues pursued and punished with the same severity, it must tend to destroy all respect for legislation. They will be no longer solicitous to manifest their innocence, but to secure their impunity; and to the honour of obeying will succeed that of evading the laws. Nor is this all. In the detection of these artificial crimes, the assistance of the profligate and abandoned alone can be expected; which will complete the triumph of wickedness over piety and innocence. To the alliance betwixt church and state we are already familiarized; but an alliance, under pretence of securing the church, betwixt the ministers of religion and a detestable spawn of spies and informers, will appear surprising; nor is it difficult to foresee what ideas it will impress of that religion which stands in need of such aid, or of those ministers who stoop to employ it. Until, by some strange revolution, all the traces of genuine christianity, and all the history of its propagation, are effaced from the mind, it will be impossible for men to mistake this for the religion of Jesus; a religion which grew up in the midst of sufferings, and whose only weapon is love. In such proceedings they will look for the marks and signs of the true church, and instead of the successors of the apostles, they will imagine they behold a Jewish sanhedrim solemnly commanding the illiterate disciples of Jesus to "teach no more in that name."

It is more than probable that a similar reply will be

made, to that of the apostles on a similar occasion, "Whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye." Under a full conviction that they are in the path of duty, and promoting the eternal happiness of mankind, it is not easy to see how they can desist. Whatever political superiors may imagine, he who conceives himself implicated in the command to "preach the gospel to every creature," will find it morally impossible to yield active obedience to any contrary command. "We cannot," saith the apostle, "but speak the things which we have heard and seen."

To nominal christians, who may rather be said to comply with the religion of their country than to believe it, on such a subject it is in vain to appeal; but they who are impressed with the importance of eternal things, and know "the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation," will feel no hesitation how to determine in this case.

In perfect consistency with a cheerful submission to the civil authority of their superiors, they will consider it a duty resulting from their allegiance to Jesus Christ to persist in their endeavours to convert mankind.

That coercive measures will tend to ferment a spirit of division in the kingdom, can admit of little doubt. Many, it may be reasonably expected, will feel a generous concern for the oppressed, though they may ridicule the cause in which they suffer; while men of enlarged minds, and who are thoroughly imbued with the love of liberty, will perceive in any one act of oppression, however insulated, a precedent most dangerous to freedom. The mischief in itself may appear little, and the merit of the sufferers inconsiderable in their eyes; but they will consider it as an experiment on the public mind, calculated to prepare them for other acts of oppression; they will consider every thing as alarming that impairs the integrity of freedom, from a conviction that a vessel may be sunk by the smallest leak.

Thus two formidable parties will probably be produced in the kingdom, inflamed with mutual animosity and suspicion. Of the parliament which assembled in the

year 1640, on the eve of those commotions which afterwards broke out into a civil war, and issued in such fatal extremities, the puritans formed but a small part. The majority of the number consisted of persons attached to the established church, but who felt indignant at the oppression* of the puritans and the cruelties of Laud. Their attachment to liberty taught them to identify themselves with the sufferers, and to discover in the severities of the star-chamber and the high commission court, an exertion of an arbitrary power utterly incompatible with the security of a free people.

Although many causes, it must be confessed, contributed to the ruin of the unfortunate Charles, no single one had so much influence as that religious intolerance which was so unhappy a feature in his character; as, on the other hand, nothing contributed so much to support the precarious authority of Cromwell, and to produce an artificial calm in the midst of so many raging factions, so many stormy elements, as a general liberty of conscience. This, as is remarked by the celebrated Bishop of Meaux, was the great secret of his policy.

The policy of Charles, instead of making him regarded as the common father of his subjects and the guardian of their welfare, providing for the happiness of every part with parental care and impartial solicitude, made him to become the head of a party, while he lent himself as the instrument of gratifying its mean and sanguinary passions; by which means he became the idol of a faction, but lost the hearts of his people. The policy of Cromwell mitigated resentment, conciliated prejudice, and made those acquiesce in his pretensions and concur to maintain his authority, who agreed in nothing else. How precious must that liberty of conscience be, and how fearful the resentment of its loss, which could prompt a great people to suffer their native prince to wander in exile, and subsist on the alms of rival courts; and reconcile them to the yoke of a master whose power was not supported by the smallest shadow

* Clarendon, vol. i. 184.

of justice! If such effects followed from invading liberty of conscience at a time when its right had never been ascertained, what may we not apprehend from its violation after an uninterrupted possession of it for a hundred years? when it has become familiar to our laws, habits, and manners, and the apprehension of its danger has been succeeded by an experience of its advantages. What will be the ultimate issue, should Providence in its infinite wisdom suffer our adversaries to prevail, and the cruelties of persecution to be renewed, it belongs not to me to conjecture: but it may be granted me to express my humble hope that we shall stand firm in the day of trial; not forgetting, that persecution and sufferings have been the lot of the most eminent of God's servants; that in walking in this path we are encompassed with "a cloud of witnesses;" with apostles, prophets, and evangelists, whose words will teach, whose examples will encourage, us to adorn that cause by our sufferings which we are no longer permitted to aid by our exertions.

Having executed to the best of my ability the plan I proposed, my freedom, I trust, will be pardoned if I suggest a few hints of advice to those who are employed in disseminating the knowledge of christianity in villages.

1. To abstain from political reflection, and from censuring either the constitution of the church or the clergy, is a part of prudence on which I ever would hope it is needless to insist.

2. Though I am convinced that those who attempt to evangelize the poor do not fail to inculcate the morality of the gospel, it may yet be doubted whether this is done with sufficient distinctness and detail. A notion prevails among some, that to preach the gospel includes nothing more than a recital or recapitulation of the peculiar doctrines of christianity. If these are firmly believed and zealously embraced they are ready to suppose the work is done, and that all the virtues of the christian character will follow by necessary consequence. Hence they satisfy themselves with recommending holiness in

general terms, without entering into its particular duties; and this in such a manner as rather to predict it as the result of certain opinions, than to enforce it on the ground of moral obligation; which tends to disjoin faith and virtue by turning all the solicitude of men to the former, while the latter is left to provide for itself, and to make them substitute the agitation of the passions, and the adoption of a speculative creed, in the room of that renovation of heart and life which the Scriptures render necessary.

Some apology, it is true, ought to be made for those who have leaned to this extreme from the circumstances in which they have been placed. Having been called to preach to people who were ignorant of the very first truths of religion, they have supposed it necessary to employ themselves in laying the foundation. On the supposition we were to address an audience that was not acquainted with the primary doctrines, it would be necessary to begin with relating the facts and teaching the doctrines which are the basis of the christian dispensation. The *credenda*, or things to be believed, must necessarily precede the *facienda*, or things to be done. But though things must proceed in this order, no durable separation should be made of the doctrines from the duties of christianity; lest the poeple should acquire a corrupt taste, and, satisfied with their first attainments and impressions, neglect to cultivate that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." When they have been long detained in the elementary doctrines, they are not unfrequently found to acquire a distaste for the practical parts of scripture; an impatience of reproof; a dislike, in short, of every thing but what flatters them with a favourable opinion of their character and their state. Proud, bigoted, disputatious, careless of virtue, tenacious of subtleties, their religion evaporates in opinion, and their supposed conversion is nothing more than an exchange of the vices of the brute for those of the speculator in theological difficulties.

The best method of preventing this fatal abuse of evangelical doctrine is to inculcate, in immediate connexion with it, those virtues of the christian character by which faith must be tried, frequently, distinctly, and fully. Instead of recommending practical religion only in general terms, under the phrase of holiness or any other, let us, in imitation of inspired preachers, explain in what that holiness consists. When John came preaching "repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand," he did not satisfy himself with barren and general abstractions: in reply to the inquiries of those who asked him what they must do, he entered into details, he imparted specific advice, and enjoined specific duties corresponding to the different conditions of men, and their relation to each other in society. Had he contented himself with merely reiterating the command to repent in general terms, as, it is to be feared, is too often the case, his hearers might have mistaken a transient compunction, a vague sensation of uneasiness, for the duty demanded: but by that particularity of application he adopted, the conscience was informed, and the necessity perceived of "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance."

The conscience is not likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness, without delineation of character: they may alarm at first; but, after a while, if they be often asserted merely as general truths, which involve the whole human race, they will supply no materials for self-examination or painful retrospect. They will, in process of time, be regarded as doctrinal points, and pass from the conscience into the creed. He must know little of human nature who perceives not the callousness of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a general abstract form. It is not in this way that religious instruction can be made permanently interesting. It is when particular vices are displayed as they appear in real life, when the arts of self-deception are detected, and the vain excuses by which the sinner palliates his guilt, evades the conviction of conscience, and secures a delusive tranquillity: in a word, it is when the heart is

forced to see in itself the original of what is described by the apostle, and, perceiving that "the secrets of his heart are made manifest, he falls down and confesses that God is amongst us of a truth." The reproof which awakened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and tremble, turned, not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circumstances of aggravation attending that which he had committed. The sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, which produced such decisive effects, was not a general declamation on the evil of sin, but it contained a specific charge against his hearers of having rejected and crucified their Messiah. When Paul was called before Felix, being well acquainted with his character, he adapted his discourse accordingly, and "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come," until "Felix trembled." The delineations of character and the injunctions of scripture on practical points are not couched in general terms; they are diversified and particular; nor can it justly be doubted that the more of individuality, if I may be allowed the expression, our pictures of human nature possess, the more impressive will they become. It is in this department of public instruction there is scope for endless variety; for the highest exertions of intellect, and the richest stores of knowledge.

The doctrines of christianity, though of infinite importance, are yet few and simple, capable of few combinations, and of little variety of illustration; too precise to leave any thing for the understanding to invent; too awful to permit the imagination to embellish. It is not in the statement of christian doctrines, considered in themselves, that experience, talents, and knowledge find scope for their exertion.

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ON THE RIGHT OF WORSHIP.*

Worship consists in the performance of all those external acts, and the observance of all those rites and ceremonies, in which men engage with the professed and sole view of honouring God. It is consequently in a pre-eminent manner the concern of conscience; for, as God is the supreme master and legislator, it is impossible for a conscientious man, in compliance with human injunctions, either to omit any part of that worship which he apprehends God to require, or to perform any which he has forbidden. In worship, the creature has to do only with his Creator. There are, unquestionably, some regards due to God, some expressions of our reverence to him and our dependence upon him, which it is our duty to render; and the duties which have God immediately for their object, must be in their obligation paramount to every other; that is, such that the commands of no human superior can discharge us from it. It remains only to be considered by what criterion these duties are to be ascertained.

Among the different modes of worship which prevail in different countries, and in the same country, to what standard are we to appeal? by what principle is the solution to be made? Either the mere will of the magistrate, or the conscience of the individual, must decide in this case. I say, the *mere* will, because if the promulgation of his will be enforced by arguments and reasons, these arguments are necessarily submitted to the judgement of the subject; and consequently, as far as they are concerned, he is still left to his conscience. But if such a power as this be vested in the magistrate, it is highly necessary to examine the consequences to which it will lead. It will legitimate all the persecutions which the heathen emperors inflicted on the primitive christians as well as the more recent popish cruelties. For from what principle did those persecutions flow, but that the magis-

* This appears to have been written in 1811; the preceding fifty-one pages in 1801, and 1802.

trate possessed a right to determine and prescribe the religion of his subjects, and that a refusal to comply with his authority involved political guilt? The just pretensions of magistracy in this respect are surely equal; nor can any reason be assigned for denying that authority to heathen or popish princes, within their dominions, which will not equally apply to protestant princes.

The dominion of God over his creatures is original, inalienable, and supreme; so that men must be contemplated as the subjects of God, before we consider them as members of a civil community. The formation of states, and the enaction of laws, are operations which regard man in his transient and local situation as the inhabitant of the present world. There is, on the principles of Theism, above and beyond these, an original and fundamental moral law which unites him to his Maker, and obliges him to fear, serve, and obey him as his superior Lord. That this law is more original and comprehensive than any other, is evident from this consideration, that it comprehends sovereign as well as subjects; that it regards men in those invariable, essential qualities in which they all agree; and that it can never be suspended by time or change.

As men are the creatures of God originally and essentially, and continually accountable to him, whatever laws are established for the government of particular societies, are in the nature of *by-laws*, with relation to the duties which intelligent creatures owe to God; and whenever civil magistrates interfere with these, they are guilty of the same absurdity as a particular corporation would be who formed municipal regulations inconsistent with the law of the land. No particular society has a right to make rules for its regulation which interfere with the general laws of that kingdom of which it is a part; for this would be to introduce an *imperium in imperio*, a multitude of legislatures, and a confusion and uncertainty in the principles of justice.

In like manner no human power can justly make laws which shall interfere with those duties which are previ-

ously due to God. As a necessary consequence of this, it follows, that whatever right men possess to worship God after the dictates of conscience, in a state of nature, is not diminished or impaired by entering into society. If seditious purposes be concealed under the pretext of assembling for religious worship, let the severest laws be enacted for their punishment. Let the claims of liberty of conscience be permitted as a cover for nothing which does not belong to it.

There is less reason, however, for entertaining any alarm on this head in tolerating worshipping assemblies than any other; for they are always public. They invite inspection. Who would be so infatuated as to attempt to connect treasonable or seditious designs with assemblies which are open to every one, and whose time and place of meeting are universally known? Besides, the very business of worship is at the greatest distance possible from every thing tending to inflame political passions. Directed to a spiritual and invisible Being, it withdraws the mind from the world, and turns the thoughts into a channel the most remote from those affections which disturb the repose of society.

It would be strange indeed if those exercises which have the most direct influence in tranquillizing the heart, and reducing all earthly things to comparative insignificance, must be forbidden, from an apprehension of their becoming engines of insurrection and tumult. They cannot be perverted in the smallest degree to this purpose, without their danger being perceived; and it will then be soon enough to apply remedies.

This reasoning does not apply against the magistrate selecting some one particular sect, or some one set of religious opinions, and bringing them under his exclusive patronage and encouragement; in other words the erection of a religious establishment. Whatever the advantages or inconveniences may be which result from religious establishments is foreign to the subject in hand, which regards only the free and full toleration of different sects, as long as they contain themselves within the limits of civil submission.

It will be alleged that on these principles a multitude of ignorant enthusiasts and wild fanatics will start up, and, under the pretence of preaching the gospel, bring religion into contempt, and thence eventually open a door for profaneness and impiety. That this may in some instances be the consequence of unlimited toleration of christian worship, cannot perhaps be denied; as little can it be denied that this is a great evil. It is much to be lamented that any should engage in the functions of a christian minister, who, in addition to an unblemished character, is not possessed of a competent measure of ability. But this inconvenience may be only one instance, among an infinity of others, of a partial evil, connected with a principle productive of the greatest good.

Pure and unmixed good is not the portion of earth. We cannot specify a single law in the natural or moral world, which falls within the sphere of our observation, which is not productive (along with permanent good) of occasional evils. This mixture of partial evil with the source of general happiness, seems to be an essential part of the imperfections of the present state. If the magistrate is invested with the power of suppressing all whom he thinks incompetent to the office of a preacher, there can be no liberty and no tranquillity. But it is surely of more consequence to a state to preserve the most valuable portion of its liberty, than to preserve a perfect exemption from fanaticism. The care of the former falls within the proper province of a magistrate. The latter is consistent with a high degree of national prosperity. Religious enthusiasm becomes dangerous to a state only when it is the subject of oppression. There is in it an elastic quality which repels vigorous coercion. The vivid impressions of religious objects which it includes, rather tend to sink the value of all earthly interests, to annihilate the world and all its concerns, and to produce a conduct which, though it may be wild and incoherent, yet, if left to itself, will be mild, inoffensive, and benevolent. Besides, enthusiasm consisting in a preternatural state of exaltation, has a strong tendency to subside in a

short time, and with the increase of knowledge to purify itself until it settles into calm enlightened piety. It is not, like superstition, a permanent evil. The enthusiast is impatient of control in his religious concerns, but does not aspire after dominion. In proportion as the passions are strongly possessed by invisible objects, the interests of the present state lose their ascendency, and the enraptured enthusiast is more in danger of becoming indolent than factious. The most effectual way of transporting such characters into political excesses, is to inflame them by oppression,—when they naturally learn to consider their enemies as the enemies of God, and throw the whole weight of their religious prejudices and passions into the scale of political opposition; while, on the other hand, a complete toleration is the most effectual remedy for their intemperance; leaving them leisure to reflect, and affording room for the ordinary motives and principles of life to resume their ascendency.

In the history of those sects which have been the most justly branded with enthusiasm, we shall uniformly find that, while they were exasperated by persecution they were fierce and wild, and their fanaticism continued unsubdued; but no sooner were they left unmolested than those features in their character which excited alarm, gradually wore off, and they ceased to be formidable.

The history of the Baptists who rose, in the sixteenth century, in Germany, and of the Quakers in England, confirms the truth of this remark.

Though the tyrannical measures pursued by Charles the First, at the beginning of his reign, naturally excited alarm and awoke opposition, it seems evident the civil war could never have been kindled but for the intolerable cruelties inflicted by Laud on nonconformists, which cemented the various sects, and made them unite in a vehement opposition to the government of Charles, while their tenets were too discordant to permit them to unite in any thing else. The magnitude of eternal interests, and the mighty force of religious passions, were superadded to the causes already existing of political contention, and by their union kindled those flames of war

which consumed the land. Cromwell, on the other hand, whose usurpation was supported by no law, and who had to contend with the whole weight of virtuous prejudice in favour of the constitution he had overturned, and the family he had expelled, practised an opposite policy, and contrived to retain in subjection three kingdoms, by granting to the rival sects a general toleration, and balancing their power against each other. The importance of this expedient in the preservation of his power has been acknowledged, both in England and the continent, by the most inveterate enemies of that extraordinary man. The eloquent Bishop of Meaux, in his funeral oration for Henrietta of France, ascribes his success principally to this measure of his administration. Since the revolution, at which a universal religious toleration took place, amidst all our calamities and reverses, an unexampled duration of domestic peace has been enjoyed, with two very short interruptions from occasions foreign from the topic under present consideration; and during this protracted period, the mild spirit of legislation has communicated itself to all sects, and in a very eminent degree mitigated the acrimony of religious zeal.

A species of religious fanaticism, it is confessed, made its appearance in the sixteenth century in Germany, and in the next century in England, which was of a highly political complexion, and struck immediately at the root of civil power, the distinctions of rank, and the offices of magistracy; but even the history of the Baptists in Germany, and of the Fifth-monarchy men, supplies reasons for toleration, since we see that the obnoxious tenets which distinguished them soon disappeared, and that under milder treatment their successors have retained only some peculiarities of the most harmless kind. The extravagant flights of fanaticism, its visionary spirit, which might tempt its possessors to trample upon the rules of society, can never last long or extend far; for the principles of self-preservation, the physical wants of the lower orders especially, who are most obnoxious to such impressions, the spirit of imitation, the habit of submission to superiors, together with the ordinary occupations of life, are principles of perpetual operation, the influence of which will soon surmount the strongest feelings, which operate only occasionally and by starts, and will consequently force the mind back into its proper element. For the same reasons it can never extend far. Minds only of a peculiar texture will feel its impression. A vast majority of every community will be too wise, too busy, too sensual, or too phlegmatic, to be transported into dangerous excesses by causes which operate on the imagination, and which have no relation to the more ordinary sources of pain and pleasure. No fanaticism of this kind has made its appearance at present, nor is there any room to presume it will. Some degree of enthusiasm, perhaps, generally accompanies religious impressions in uncultivated minds, at their commencement. Enthusiasm may be defined that religious state of mind in which the imagination is unduly heated, and the passions outrun the understanding. But when persons are first deeply impressed with the infinitely momentous concerns of a future life, and are thereby introduced as it were into a new world, it is too much to expect their religious affections shall be perfectly regulated, or their conduct, under circumstances so novel, be consistent with the exactest rules of propriety. New situations, whether resulting from a moral and internal change, or from outward circumstances, make it necessary for some time to pass, before those who are led into them know perfectly how to adjust their behaviour to them. But if the profession of piety be sincere (and of hypocrisy we are not at present speaking) it will eventually secure, together with the essential moral virtues, a regard to decorum and to all the minuter proprieties of social intercourse. In the mean time, where the love of God and man predominates, it will ill become the governor of a christian country, and still less the governor of a christian church, to suffer himself to be so much offended at the intemperate effusions of honest zeal, as to disregard the substance of religion because it may be deficient in some of its more amiable appendages.

If we adopt the maxims of a profane and careless

world, we shall be taught to look upon all zealous christians as enthusiasts or hypocrites; for when have they not, by a majority of mankind, been represented in that light? To men of the world it appears so strange that men should be affected by the consideration of invisible realities in any degree proportioned to the influence of present objects: it is so utterly remote from all their practical estimates; that they have no means of accounting for it without imputing it to a partial insanity or deliberate hypocrisy. But this is only one among numberless glaring inconsistencies of human conduct. For these very persons, it is probable, have never formally renounced the authority of Jesus Christ, who commands us to "seek *first* the kingdom of God," nor the certainty of an eternal state, in comparison of which the interests and prospects of the present are annihilated; and yet they are surprised to find that good and evil should be estimated with regard to their respective magnitude, and that any should be weak enough to credit the declarations and obey the precepts of our common Lord. Such is the fascination of the world, and so complete its triumph in effecting a total divorce of the speculations from the practical belief of professed christians. If the truths which religion reveals, and the hopes it inspires, respect an infinite good, and the present life be, as we know by experience, short and transitory, it must be the truest wisdom to be deeply solicitous to attain that good, and to be disposed to make any sacrifice of present pleasure and convenience with a view to it; and when this is the habitual state of the mind, it will imprint some traces of itself in the external deportment, which the irreligious part of mankind will be sure to brand with the name of hypocrisy or fanaticism.

The primitive christians encountered this reproach, and their successors must expect it in proportion as they tread in their steps. That world to which we are hastening will determine who are justly chargeable with folly; they who treat eternal things according to their true nature, who, making the service of God their supreme concern, pass the time of their sojourning here in fear; or they, the language of whose conduct is, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

To suppose that that religious state of mind in which devout affections are highly [raised]* is enthusiastic, is a most pernicious mistake, and would in its consequences utterly extirpate religion, and expunge a great part of the Scriptures. The smallest acquaintance with the New Testament must convince every one that the apostles and primitive christians were no strangers to the strongest religious emotions.

We read of a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," of a "peace that passeth all understanding," with innumerable other expressions of a similar kind, which indicate strong and vehement emotions of mind. That the great objects of christianity, called eternity, heaven and hell, are of sufficient magnitude to justify vivid emotions of joy, fear, and love, is indisputable, if it be allowed we have any relation to them; nor is it less certain that religion could never have any powerful influence, if it did not influence through the medium of the affections. All objects which have any permanent influence, influence the conduct in this way. We may possibly be first set in motion by their supposed connexion with our interest; but unless they draw to themselves particular affections, the pursuit soon terminates.

The cool calculation of interest operates only at times; we are habitually borne forward in all parts of our career by specific affections and passions; some more simple and original, others complicated and acquired. In men of a vulgar cast, the grosser appetites, in minds more elevated, the passions of sympathy, taste, ambition, the pleasures of imagination, are the springs of motion. The world triumphs over its votaries by approaching them on the side of their passions; and it does not so much deceive their reason as captivate their heart.

It is in this way the love of the world must be repelled. As it is not chiefly by imposing on the understanding, or

* Whenever a word is placed thus between brackets, it is supplied conjecturally, the manuscript being illegible.—Ed.

misleading the rational assent, that the world triumphs over its votaries, so the mere inculcation of religious truth on the intellect, without forming deep and lasting impressions on the heart, will never be sufficient to emancipate us from its control. The difficulties which accrue in a religious career, especially at its outset, are so many and formidable, that unless we are deeply *interested* as well as convinced, perseverance is impracticable. In that victory over the world which is promised to faith, it is necessary to oppose feeling to feeling, and pleasure to pleasure. The intemperate attachment to sensual pleasure must be subdued by the fear of punishment; the vain and extravagant hopes which present scenes inspire must be effaced by hopes more solid and more animating; and to wean us from the breasts of earthly, we must be led to the breasts of spiritual, consolation.

The world amuses, enchants, transports us; how shall religion teach us to triumph over it, if it present nothing but speculative conclusions, and if the views of a rational self-interest which it displays, were not intimately associated with objects adapted to engage and fill the heart? Would the primitive christians have taken *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods, because they had in heaven a more enduring substance? Would they not only have felt calm and resolute, but accounted "it all joy when they suffered divers persecutions," if the objects of eternity had not occupied a large share of their affections?

The familiar acknowledgement, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor;* the frequency with which men act contrary to the most mature convictions of reason and conscience, shows how inefficacious is a mere speculative conviction, when opposed to inveterate habits and passions. What is the defect here experienced, but a want of the correspondent feelings and impressions from which that state of desire results which impels to virtuous actions?

As the objects of religion are infinite and eternal, if the mind is duly affected by them at all, they have a tendency to enlarge and propagate their correspondent

affections more and more; and will probably tend ultimately to absorb and extinguish all other hopes and fears.

Though good men are continually approaching nearer and nearer to this state, it is neither possible nor desirable they should reach it in this life. The multitude of pains, difficulties, and perplexities, with which they have to encounter, are continually drawing their attention to present objects; and the duties of the present state could not be performed in that exalted state of spirituality. An eminent degree and vigour of the religious affections, then, ought not to be denominated fanaticism, unless they arise from wrong views of religion, or are so much indulged as to disqualify for the duties of society. Within these limits, the more elevated devotional sentiments are, the more perfect is the character, and the more suited to the destination of a being, who has, indeed, an important part to act here, but who stands on the confines of eternity. He may justly be styled a fanatic, who, under a pretence of spirituality, neglects the proper business of life, or who, from mistaken views of religion, elevates himself to an imaginary superiority to the rules of virtue and morality. Whatever other kind of fanaticism, real or pretended, [exists,] seems not to fall, in the smallest degree, under the conduct of the civil magistrates; nor is there any danger of immorality being inculcated under any corruption of the christian doctrine. Many religious systems, considered in their theory, may seem to tend to the encouragement of vice; they may, in their speculative consequences, set aside the obligations of virtue; but the uncorrupted dictates of conscience, the general sentiments of mankind repecting right and wrong, and the close alliance betwixt devotion and virtue, will always counteract this tendency, so far, that the same persons will be more moral with very erroneous religious opinions, than without religion. A practical disregard to piety is the prolific source of vice. We shall find the minds of every sect of christians, who are zealous in religion, superior to those who are careless and profane. Whatever tends to draw the attention to God and eternity, tends to destroy the dominion of sin.

Under the varied forms of religious belief which have prevailed among the different parties of christians, little variation has taken place in the rule of life. In the first age of christianity, the church was accused, by the malice of its enemies, of the most shameful and unnatural practices; which it disclaimed, but, at the same time, very injudiciously insinuated that the Gnostics were guilty of the crimes which were alleged; but the result of the more calm and dispassionate investigation of later times, has been a growing conviction that these surmises had no foundation in fact. The doctrines of our holy religion may be wofully curtailed and corrupted, and its profession sink into formality; but its moral precepts are so plain and striking, and guarded by such clear and awful sanctions, as to render it impossible it can ever be converted into an active instrument of vice. Let the appeal be made to facts. Look through all the different sects and parties into which professed christians are unhappily divided. Where is there one to be found who has innovated in the rule of life, by substituting vice in place of virtue? The fears entertained from this quarter must be considered as chimerical and unfounded until they are confirmed by the evidence of facts. In those districts in which the dissenters and methodists have been most zealous and successful in village preaching, are the morals of the people more corrupted than in other places? Are they distinguished by a greater degree of profligacy, intemperance, and debauchery, than the inhabitants of other parts of the country? The advocates of rigorous measures will scarcely have the temerity to put the question upon this issue; and until they do, all their pretended dread of the growth of licentiousness from village preaching, will be considered as nothing but artifice.

To contend for the legal monopoly of religious instruction, under pretence of securing the morals of the people, is a similar kind of policy with that of the papists, who withhold the Scriptures, from the common people, lest they should be betrayed into heresy. We all perceive the design of the papist in this restriction is to prevent

the diffusion of knowledge, which would be fatal to ghostly dominion. Is it not equally evident that the prohibition to instruct the populace in the principles of christianity originates in this jealousy of power?

We must, at least, be permitted to express our surprise at the profound sagacity of those who can discover a design to destroy morality by inculcating religion, and a purpose of making men vicious by making them serious. Plain men must be excused if they are startled by such refined and intricate paradoxes.

It highly becomes those who are the advocates for the interference of government to restrain the efforts of methodists and dissenters to diffuse the principles of knowledge and piety, to advert to the consequences which must result.

Those who are conscientious will feel it their duty, in opposition to the mandates of authority, to proceed patiently, enduring whatever punishment the legislature may think proper to inflict. The government, irritated at their supposed criminal obstinacy, will be tempted to enact severer laws accompanied with severer penalties, which the truly conscientious will still think it their duty to brave, imitating the example of the primitive teachers of christianity, who departed from the presence of the council, "rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer for the name of Christ." Thus will commence a struggle betwixt the ruling powers and the most upright part of the subjects, which shall first wear each other out, the one by infliction, or the other by endurance; prisons will be crowded, cruel punishments will become familiar, and blood probably will be spilt. The nation will be afflicted with the frightful spectacle of innocent and exemplary characters suffering the utmost vengeance of the law for crimes which the sufferers glory in having committed.

It is an inherent and inseparable inconvenience in persecution that it knows not where to stop. It only aims at first to crush the obnoxious sect; it meets with a sturdy resistance; it then punishes the supposed crime of obstinacy, till at length the original magnitude of the

error is little thought of in the solicitude to maintain the rights of authority. This is illustrated in the letter of Pliny to Trajan,* treating of the persecution of christians. *Their obstinacy* in refusing to comply with the mandates of supreme authority [constituted the crime.] In other penal laws, a proportion is usually observed betwixt the crime and the punishment, the evil and the remedy; but here the pride of dictating and imposing mingles itself, and draws [reasons] for severity even from the insignificance of the error and of the persecuted sect, which should be its protection.

As the power of the community is delegated to the magistrate to enable him to punish such delinquencies, and to avenge such injuries, as it would be unsafe to leave to the resentment of the individual to punish, the voice of law should ever be in harmony with the voice of conscience and of reason. It should punish only those actions which are previously condemned in the tribunal of every man's own breast. The majesty of law, considered as an authoritative rule of action, can only be maintained by its agreement with the simple and unsophisticated decisions of the mind respecting right and wrong. On these principles law is entitled to profound veneration as a sort of secondary morality, or an application of the principles of virtue and social order to the real situation and actual circumstances of mankind. As the civil magistrate is invested with a portion of divine authority for the government of men, so wise legislation is a reservoir of moral regulation and principles drawn from the springs and fountains of eternal justice. When government is thus conducted, it leagues all the virtues on its side; whatever is venerable, whatever is good rallies round the standard of authority; and to support the dignity of the laws is to support virtue itself. In persecution it is directly the opposite. When innocent persons [suffer] for a resolute adherence to the dictates of conscience, the sentiments of moral approbation are necessarily disjoined from the operation of the laws.

* Lib. x. Epis. 97 -Ed.

The fear of civil punishment is a motive which the wisdom of mankind has superadded to the other motives which operate to restrain men from criminal conduct. The contempt and hatred of our fellow-creatures, and the dread of punishment from an invisible Judge, are not always found in fact to be of sufficient force to control the unruly passions of bad men. In addition to this, men have contrived so to organize society, that the disturbers of other men's peace and the invaders of their rights shall have to dread an adequate punishment from the arm of a public person who represents the community. As the fears with which human laws inspire offenders, are superadded motives, they pre-suppose the existence of an original one. They are a superstructure which can only stand on the foundation of those distinctions of right and wrong which the simplest dictates of the understanding recognise. To disjoin the fear of human [laws] from its natural associates, the forfeiture of public esteem, and the dread of divine wrath, is a solecism of the most glaring nature.

Again, the terror of punishment is designed to operate on the community at large, not on a small number of people of a peculiar manner of thinking. But the great body of a people are affected only by what is palpable; they are unable to comprehended subtle and refined reasoning. It is only what is plain and evident that is tangible by their gross conceptions. Admitting, therefore, that the criminality of persisting to follow the dictates of conscience in matters of religion were capable of demonstration, it would remain a very improper object of punishment, because the evidence of its criminality could never be generally understood. The guilt of the sufferer would always be considered as very equivocal; and the sentiments of the community [divided] between the condemnation of the persecuted party and the government. From this will naturally follow two parties in the state, influenced with the most vehement mutual resentment and antipathy; and all the combustible materials already collected are liable to be kindled by the sparks of religious contention. Have not religious

persecutions been almost invariably the harbinger of civil wars, alarming commotions, and awful calamities? Persecution in matters of religion raises up the very hydra it is meant to destroy. The only plausible ground on which it can be defended, is the danger of the state accruing from a diversity of opinion on matters of the first importance, and the necessity, in order to secure public tranquillity, to establish uniformity of opinion. But when persecutions are adopted, the lawfulness of those very measures becomes a subject of contention, as interesting as the dissensions it is designed to terminate.

The question of the claim to liberty of conscience is surely a question of this kind.

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MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

WRITTEN IN 1786, OR 1787

CHARACTER OF CLEANDER.

[*Written in* 1786.]

"NEC ASPERA TERRENT."

WHOEVER contemplates the various calamities that fill the world, and the still more numerous avenues by which we are exposed to distress, will be affected with a sense of the misery of man. In this survey, we need not search for remote and distant evils; we need not crowd our imagination with the horrors of war, the progress of armies, or the desolation of states. In the most familiar walks of life we meet with scenes at which humanity must bleed: scenes of distress lie open on every side: every quarter is filled with the groans of the dying, and lamentations for the dead. In the mass of mankind we can scarcely select an individual in whose bosom there do not rankle unpublished griefs; and, could we look into the hearts of the most tranquil, we should often find them a prey to unpitied regrets, torn with anxiety, and bleeding with disappointments.

Retiring from this melancholy spectacle, without looking any further, we might be ready to consider the world as a great nursery of disease, a vast receptacle of miseries, filled with beings whom Providence has endowed with sensibility to suffer, rather than capacities to enjoy; but to him who views the moral influence of afflictions, the evils they are intended to correct, and the benefits they impart, they will appear in a very different light; he will consider them as at once the punishments of vice, and the cure of it. Sorrow is, indeed, the offspring of guilt, but the parent of wisdom. Stern in her

aspect, and severe in her deportment, she is, however, sent on a message of mercy. She is destined to follow in the footsteps of intemperance, to break her enchantments, to expose her delusions, and to deliver from thraldom such as are entangled in her snares, or are sleeping in her arms. Whoever surveys the course of his past life, with a view to remark the false steps he has taken in it, will find that, as they have been preceded by indiscretion, they have been recalled by distress. To every object our attachment is proportioned to the pleasures we have received, or expect to receive, from it; and the passion will continue to be cherished as long as the recollection of it calls up ideas of pleasure rather than of pain. Now, every vicious pursuit is founded on indulgence, and disguised by inclination. To the licentious and abandoned, therefore, there is no prospect of the termination of their vices, till, by actual experience of the miseries they inflict, they convey to the mind more sentiments of aversion than of love.

From the moment that the enchantment is dispelled, the false colours stripped off, they will be regarded as specious deformities and real dangers. Multitudes, who could never be persuaded by the calls of interest, or the voice of conviction, to restrain the licence of their passions, and abandon their criminal pursuits, have been reclaimed by the lash of adversity. The decay of health, the desertion of friends, and the neglect of the world, have not unfrequently softened those hardier spirits, to whom the charms of virtue have been displayed in vain.

Nor is sorrow less effectual in the correction of foibles than in the extinction of vice. Cleander, in other respects a man of virtue and honour, had, from his infancy, accustomed himself to the unbounded indulgence of his tongue. Upon all occasions, he trod on the very brink of decorum, a total stranger to the delicacies of friendship, which generously hides the faults it cannot correct. His ridicule was turned on the imperfections of his friends and his enemies, with indiscriminate severity. The splendour of distinguished virtue, which sets at a distance the reproaches of the world, and

almost sanctifies the blemishes of an illustrious character, exempted no foibles from the scourge of Cleander; but rather quickened his acuteness to remark, and his asperity to expose them, as it furnished a display of his penetration in discovering imperfections, where there appeared to the world nothing but unmingled excellence. It was, indeed, his delight to remark the shades of a brilliant character, and to portray with exactness the secret gradations of excellence by which it fell short of perfection. Yet, in Cleander, this conduct by no means sprang from envy of superior worth, or the malignant desire of degrading every one to his own level. He possessed the magnanimity of a virtuous mind, and disdained to lessen his own inferiority by any other means than that of honest emulation. It had its basis in a taste for ridicule, and the pride of wit. His deportment could not fail to issue in perplexity and distress. His enemies considered him as a kind of beast of prey, a savage of the desert, whom they were authorized to wound by every weapon of offence, some by open defamation, and some by poisoned arrows in the dark. His friends began to look upon him with alienation and distrust, esteeming their character too sacred to be suspended, for the sport of an individual, on the breezy point of levity and wit.

His appearance was a signal for general complaint; and he could scarcely enter into company hoping to enjoy the unmingled pleasures of social converse, but he had innumerable jealousies to allay, and misunderstandings to set right. He was every where received with marks of disgust; met with resentment for which he could not account; and was daily obliquely insulted for careless strokes of satire, of which he retained no recollection. Wherever he turned himself, he found his path was strewed with thorns; and that even they who admired his wit secretly vilified his character, and shrunk from his acquaintance. His peace began to bleed on every side; his reputation was tarnished; his fairest prospects blasted; and Cleander, at length, awakened from his delusions, was convinced, when it was too late,

of a lesson he had often been taught in vain, that the attachments of friendship, and the tranquillity of life, are too valuable to be sacrificed to a blaze of momentary admiration.

A consideration of the benefit of afflictions should teach us to bear them patiently, when they fall to our lot; and to be thankful to heaven for having planted such barriers around us, to restrain the exuberance of our follies and our crimes.

Let these sacred fences be removed; exempt the ambitious from disappointment, and the guilty from remorse; let luxury go unattended with disease, and indiscretion lead into no embarrassments or distresses; our vices would range without control, and the impetuosity of our passions have no bounds; every family would be filled with strife, every nation with carnage, and a deluge of calamities would break in upon us, which would produce more misery in a year than is inflicted by the hand of Providence in a lapse of ages.

A REVERIE.

[*Written in* 1786.]

"Aux peupliers qui bornent mon séjear,
J'avois juré de suspendre ma lyre,
De respirer, d'être heureux sans délire,
D'oser sur tout, être heureux sans l'amour
J'avois juré; mais je l'ai vu sourire,
Et sur son aile il emporte aujourd'hui
Tous les sermens que j'ai faits contre lui."

Dorat.

ENGLISHED THUS:

'On the tall poplars which surround my cot,
And mark the bound'ries of my humble lot,
Where I so oft of Cupid's power have sang,
I fiercely swore my unstrung lyre to hang:
To breathe in peace—to taste the quiet joy
Of calm contentment, which can never cloy:
But more than all—to banish from my heart
Tormenting love, and its too pleasing smart:
Thus did I swear—but, listening Cupid smil'd,
And, whilst with his enchantments he beguil'd,
He wafted on his pinions far away
My fruitless oaths, rebellious to his sway."

Ineptus.

After reading some passages in the fourth book of Virgil, in which he paints the distress of Dido, upon her being deserted by Æneas, I could not help revolving in my mind, with a good deal of uneasiness, the miseries of love. My reflections threw me into a Reverie, which presented to my mind an imaginary train of circumstances, which I shall now relate, hoping they may tend to cherish that virtuous sensibility which is the ornament of our nature. My fancy naturally carried me into the

times of heathenish superstition, which I hope will be my apology for mentioning gods and goddesses. I imagined that the power of Love had occasioned general discontent, and that the different orders of men had entered into an agreement to petition Jupiter for her removal.

I thought that at the head of these complainers stood the men of learning and science; they lamented with vehemence the inroads of love, and that it often betrayed them from the paths of knowledge, into perplexity and intrigue. They alleged that it extinguished, in the bosom of the young, all thirst after laudable improvement, and planted in its stead frivolous and tormenting desires. That the pursuit of truth called for a tranquil and serene state of mind; whilst love was constantly attended with tumult and alarm. Whatever turn she takes, said they, she will ever be an enemy to labour; her smiles are too gay, and her disappointments too melancholy, for any serious application. They were grieved to see that so trifling a passion should occupy so much time and attention, and that man, who was formed to contemplate the heavens and the earth, should spend half his life in gaining the good graces of the weaker and more inconsiderable part of his species. I thought I perceived that this turn for love and gallantry gave particular offence to the whole tribe of astronomers and profound philosophers. They saw, with indignation, that many of our youth were more anxious to explain a look than to solve a problem, and that they would often be playing with a fan when they should be handling a quadrant. It infatuates every one, said they, who is so unhappy as to be touched with it. He is often more attentive to every change of countenance in a celebrated beauty than to the phases of the moon; and is more anxious to be acquainted with all her manœuvres than with the motions of the whole planetary system. One in particular affirmed, upon his knowledge, that he had been acquainted with students in anatomy, who looked with more curiosity into the countenance of a young beauty than upon the dissection of a bullock's eye.

Some, who pretended to see much farther than the vulgar, considered every thing relating to love as capricious and visionary. Since we are all formed of the same materials, it seemed to them very unreasonable that a little difference in form and colour should raise such violent commotions. Beauty, they said, was but a superficial covering, and every thing at the bottom was alike. Upon this principle, they looked upon it as the height of philosophy to view with indifference what has always given mankind the greatest pleasure. This humour they carried so far, that they lamented they could not strip nature herself of her delusions, as they termed them, by taking off those agreeable colourings of light and shade which lie upon objects around us, and give them all their richness and beauty. They would have been glad to have turned the creation into a colourless and dreary waste, that they might have wandered up and down, and taken a closer survey of it.

The next class of petitioners, I observed, were the men of business. They set out with remarking that they did not join in the complaints that were made against love upon their own account; for though they had been weak enough, in the younger part of their lives, to fall under its influence, it was many years since they had felt the slightest impression of it. They had in view the welfare of their children, and, this being neither more nor less than their affluence, they were led to consider love chiefly in the light of an expensive passion. Its little tendernesses and endearments appeared to them inexpressibly ridiculous, and they wondered how any body could be foolish enough to spend hours in tattling to women, without thinking to gain a farthing by it. They gave a long list of young men, who had been frugal and industrious, till they were enticed by love to prefer pleasure to profit. They declared that when we take an account of balls and treats, and trinkets of various kinds, with the loss of time inseparably attendant upon them, it was at the peril of a fortune to attempt the heart of a beloved object. I was a good deal amused with the manner in which they treated of love; they

considered it as they would any other commodity, setting a price upon every part of it. They reckon a sigh at a shilling, and, if it chanced to be observed by the person for whom it is intended, it was well even if half-a-guinea cleared the expense of it. A side glance was rated at half as much as a full view; they portioned out all the parts of a beautiful person, and made a valuation of each of them. The same scale was applied to their very attitudes: for the sight of a beautiful woman dancing was accounted a matter of enormous expense; and if she chanced to smile with any degree of complacency upon any one, it was well if he was not ruined; under these impressions, they considered love as the certain forerunner of poverty.

There was one complaint raised against this passion, which I thought had something in it more plausible than any I have yet mentioned; it turned upon the ease with which it makes its approaches upon us, and the impossibility of guarding against its first advances. We have been able, said they, by art to manage the elements, so as in general to prevent any dangerous overflowings of them. We brave the storm in ships, and dive into the sea in bells; but the ingenuity of man has hit upon no contrivance to save us from the influence of love. Could we call it in to amuse a leisure hour, or to relieve the languor of a few tedious moments, and then dismiss it again, it might be esteemed a blessing in a life so barren of enjoyment. But it is an influence that is shed all around us, and pours itself upon us in every corner. It often lies hid betwixt the keys of a harpsichord, and is shaken out with a few touches of the fingers. It flounces in an apron, and is trailed along with a flowing robe. No circumspection can preserve us from it; for it will often steal upon us when we are least upon our guard. It hides itself in a lock, and waves in ringlets of the hair. It will enter by an eye, an ear, a hand, or a foot. A glance and a gaze are sometimes equally fatal.

I was next presented with a scene which I thought as interesting and solemn as can enter into the imagination of man. This was no other than a view of the whole train of disappointed lovers. At the sight of them, my heart insensibly melted into the most tender compassion. There was an extreme dejection, mingled with a piercing wildness in their looks, that was very affecting. Cheerfulness and serenity, I could easily perceive, they had long been strangers to. Their countenances were overspread with a gloom which appeared to be of long standing, and to be collected there from dark and dismal imaginations. There was at the same time all that kind of animation in their features which betokens troubled thoughts. Their air and manner was altogether singular, and such as marks a spirit at once eager and irresolute. Their step was irregular, and they ever and anon started and looked around them, as though they were alarmed by some secret terror. I was somewhat surprised, in looking through the whole assembly, not to see any one that wept. When they were arrived at the place where they had determined to present their united petitions, I was particularly attentive to observe every thing that passed. Though I listened, I could not learn any thing distinctly. After an interval of profound silence, a murmur of only broken sighs and piercing exclamations was heard through the assembly. I should have mentioned that some of them fell off before they had got to the place of rendezvous. They halted for some time, and continued in a melancholy suspense, whether they should turn back or go forward. They knew not which to prefer, the tranquillity of indifference or the tender distresses of love; at length they inclined to the latter, not having resolution even to wish for the extinction of a passion which mingled itself with the very elements of their existence. "Why," said they, "should we banish from our minds the image of all that is pleasing and delightful, and which, if we could once forget, there would be nothing left in the world worth remembering?" The agitation and anxiety felt upon this occasion, could I lay it fully open to the reader, would form a much more interesting picture than the

deliberations of Cæsar, whether he should pass the Rubicon.

I imagined there were several other distinct bodies of men, who complained to the heavenly powers of the tyranny of love, but, the particulars having in a great measure faded from my memory, the reader must excuse my passing them over in silence. I must not, however, forget to observe, that the number and unanimity of those who presented their petitions on the occasion were such, that they might fairly be considered as representing the sentiments of far the greater part of mankind.

Perhaps Providence never chastises the folly of men more justly than by granting the indulgence of their requests. Upon this occasion, I observed, their wishes were accomplished, and they were relieved from a tyranny of which they had so heavily complained. Upon an appointed day, the Goddess of love took her flight to the higher regions, from which she had descended; her influence was at once withdrawn, and all her enchantments were broken up. I thought nothing could equal the joy that was expressed upon this occasion. The air rung with acclamations, and every man was in haste to congratulate his neighbour on his deliverance from a thraldom which had sunk the spirit and degraded the dignity of the human race. They seemed all to be lightened of a load, and to break forth with fresh vivacity and spirit. Every one imagined he was entering upon quite a new career, and that the world was laid fresh open before him.

I could not help feeling an inward delight in seeing my fellow-creatures made at once so happy. At the same time I was anxious to know what would follow upon this new revolution, and particularly whether it would answer the high expectations that were formed from it. Upon my looking around, I was a witness to appearances which filled me with melancholy and regret. A total change had taken place in the whole train of human affairs, and I observed to my sorrow, the change was every where for the worse. It was melancholy now

to enter into company; for, instead of conversation, enlivened by vivacity and wit, there was nothing heard but a drowsy humming, to the last degree tiresome and insipid. In the social intercourse of men the heart had no place; pleasure, and the desire of pleasing, were equally unknown.

Those whom I had an opportunity of observing, I thought very much resembled the loungers and coxcombs of our day, who, without any view of receiving pleasure, mingle in a crowd, and engage in conversation, not to enjoy time, but to kill it. I now sought in vain for those friendly meetings at which I had often been present, where every one, desirous of adding something to the pleasure of the whole, drew forth the fairest ideas of his mind, and, by the display of tender sentiments, melted the heart and soothed the imagination. With what regret did I recollect those conversation parties in which my heart was wont to be full, and to pour itself forth as we talked ourselves alternately into sadness and into joy!

I had an opportunity of correcting a mistake, into which I had fallen, in imagining that love reached only to courtship and marriage; I saw that it insensibly mingles with our most trifling actions, refining our thoughts, and polishing our manners, when we are least aware of it. The men had now entirely thrown aside that tenderness and gallantry which are the great ornaments of human nature, and are so peculiarly needful to temper and soften the rudeness of masculine strength. Men and women were now placed quite upon a level, so that the harmonious softness of the female voice was drowned in turbulence and noise. The ear was filled, but the heart was left empty. Politeness was exchanged for a tame civility, wit for merriment, and serenity for dulness. I began to think more highly than ever of the fair sex, and regarded them in a new light, as a beautiful mirror lying in the fancy of a lover, for him to dress his thoughts by. People were every where falling a prey to dejection, and complaining of the faintness of human enjoyments, as might well be expected, when the influence of love

was withdrawn from them, which, by inspiring romantic hopes, and romantic fears, keeps the mind always in motion, and makes it run clear and bright. You may be sure nothing could make a more ridiculous appearance than courtship, at a time when women retained their vanity, after they had lost their charms. Such is the force of habit, that you might often see a pretty creature twirling her fan, and playing off her little enchanting airs before her lover, who perhaps sat all that time perfectly insensible, fingering his buttons or picking his teeth. Vanity, I perceived, was a kind of instinct in women, that made them employ the whole artillery of their charms, when they knew they could do no execution. Indeed, their airs appeared so ridiculous now, in the eyes of the men, that they had often much ado to refrain from laughter. The coquettes particularly, in their flutterings to and fro, made as odd a figure as fish which should be frozen around in the very act of swimming. Out of respect to the ladies, however, I would compare them to the Grecian chiefs, who, according to the representation of the poets, carried with them so lively an impression of their former employments, that they would be marshalling their troops, and brandishing their swords, even in the shades below. However, the fair sex were soon relieved from this sort of ridicule. They no longer took any pains to smooth their brow, to soften their features into a smile, or to light up the beam of brightness in their eye. Careless of offending, where they knew they could not please, they became negligent in their persons, and vulgar in their air. I cannot express the regret I felt upon beholding the fairest and most beautiful part of the creation thus thrown into the shade.

I thought I perceived that the fine arts began to languish, the paintings that made their appearance at the time were neither boldly sketched, nor so brightly coloured as those I was wont to survey; they were chiefly confined to still life. I observed, however, that the extinction of love affected poetry still more than painting. It no longer regaled the mind with descriptions of beauty; or softened it with tender distress. Its enchantment was entirely dissolved; that enchantment that will carry us from world to world without moving from our seat, will raise a visionary creation around us, will make us to rejoice when there is nothing to rejoice in, and tremble when there is nothing to alarm us. These interesting situations, which awaken the attention, and enchain the mind in solemn suspense, till it breaks forth into agony or rapture, now no longer existed in nature, and were no longer described by the poet; he wrote rather from memory than feeling, for the breath of inspiration had ceased.

Upon this occasion I was not at all surprised at the decline of eloquence. I have often thought love the nurse of sensibility, and that, if it were not cherished by this passion, it would grow cold, and give way to a selfish indifference. My conjecture was now abundantly confirmed; for though I saw many discourses, composed at this time, that were well argued, elegant and correct, they all wanted those essential touches that give language its power of persuading.

One thing a good deal surprised me, and that was to observe that even the profoundest parts of learning were less attended to than ever. I was well aware that few apply themselves closely to study, but with the hope of sometimes displaying their acquisitions to the public; and I had imagined fame was a sufficient recompense for any toil human nature could sustain; but I was surprised to find that, in all great and noble undertakings, the desire of appearing respectable in the eyes of a beloved object was of more consequence than the general admiration of mankind.

These I thought were not the only melancholy consequences that flowed from the departure of love. It may be sufficient, however, to observe in general that human nature was becalmed, and all its finest emotions frozen into a torpid insensibility. The situation of mankind was truly pitiable. Strangers to the delicate pleasures of the heart, every thing around them looked cheerless and barren. Calamity left them nothing to hope and prosperity gave them nothing to enjoy.

I observed that they were now as desirous of bringing back the agency of love as they had been before to exclude it. At length, I imagined that Jupiter was touched with compassion at their unhappy situation, and appointed a day in which love was to revisit the abodes of men. An immense number of people, of all orders and ranks, and of every age and condition, assembled themselves, as you may suppose, to behold the descent of the Goddess, and to hail her approach. The heavens, I thought, glowed as she descended, and so many beautiful streaks of light glanced along the surface of the sky that they divided it into separate tracts, brightened up every cloud within it, and turned the whole into an aerial landscape. The birds at the same time leaping among the branches, and warbling their sprightliest notes, filled the air with a confused melody of sounds that was inexpressibly delightful. Every thing looked brighter than before, every thing smelled sweeter, and seemed to offer up fresh incense to the Goddess. The face of nature was changed, and the creation seemed to grow new again. My heart glowed with delight. I rejoiced in the renovation of nature, and was revived through my inmost powers. There thrilled through me a delightful sensation of freshness and novelty, similar to what a happy spirit may be supposed to feel when he first enters a new state of existence, and opens his eyes on immortality.

I thought I had but a very confused idea of the person of the Goddess herself; for her raiment was so full of light and lustre that I could scarcely take a steady view of her. I observed, however, that her complexion was rather too glowing, and the motions of her eye too piercing and fiery for perfect feminine beauty. Her beauty, I thought, was too raised, and had too much glory in it, to be entirely attractive. I was very much astonished to observe that whoever she glanced her eye upon immediately fell under the influence of the passion over which she presided. It was a very singular sight, to see a whole assembly, one after another, falling into love; and I was much entertained in observing the

change it occasioned in the looks of each of them, according to their different temper and constitution. Some appeared wild and piercing, others dejected and melancholy. The features of several glowed with admiration, whilst others looked down with a timid and bashful respect. A trait of affectation was plainly to be discerned in all of them, as might well be expected from a passion the very first effect of which is to make one lose the possession of one's self. Several ladies in particular, seemingly careless and gay, were whispering to those who stood next them, and assuming airs of particular vivacity, whilst you might easily see their countenance was chequered with anxiety, lest they should chance not to please those upon whom they had fixed their affections. The greater part of the fair sex, however, I observed, smiled with an ineffable sweetness, nor could any thing appear more lovely than their features, upon which there was imprinted a tender reserve, mingled with modest complacency and desire. I imagined that after the Goddess had thoroughly surveyed the assembly, and they had seated themselves into some degree of composure, she thus addressed them :—

"Ye children of men, ye abound in the gifts of Providence, and many are the favours heaven has bestowed upon you. The earth teems with bounty, pouring forth the necessaries of life and the refinements of luxury. The sea refreshes you with its breeze, and carries you to distant shores upon its bosom; it links nation to nation in the bonds of mutual advantage, and transfers to every climate the blessings of all. To the sun you are indebted for the splendour of the day, and the grateful return of season; it is he who guides you, as you wander through the trackless wilderness of space, lights up the beauties of Nature around you, and makes her break forth into fruitfulness and joy. But, know that these, though delightful, are not the pleasures of the heart. They will not heal the wounds of fortune; they will not enchant solitude, or suspend the feeling of pain. Know that I only am Mistress of the Soul. To me it belongs to impart agony and rapture. Hope and despair, terror

and delight, walk in my train. My power extends over time itself, as well as over all sublunary beings. It can turn ages into moments, and moments into ages. Lament not the dispensations of Providence, amongst which the bestowment of my influence is one. He who feels it may not be happy; but he who is a stranger to it must be miserable.

AN

ESSAY ON POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

[*Written in* 1787.]

It has been observed that it seldom falls to the share of one man to be both a philosopher and a poet. These two characters, in their full extent, may be said to divide betwixt them the whole empire of genius; for all the productions of the human mind fall naturally under two heads—works of imagination, and works of reason. There are indeed several kinds of composition which, to be perfect, must partake of both. In our most celebrated historians, for instance, we meet with a just mixture of the penetration that distinguishes the philosopher and the ardour of the poet; still their departments are very wide of each other, and a small degree of attention will be sufficient to show why it is so extremely difficult to unite, in any high degree, the excellence of each. The end of the poet is to give delight to his reader, which he attempts by addressing his fancy, and moving his sensibility; the philosopher purposes merely to instruct, and therefore thinks it enough, if he presents his thoughts in that order which will render them the most perspicuous, and seems best adapted to gain the attention. Their views demand, therefore, a very different procedure. All that passes under the eye of the poet, he surveys in one particular view; every form and image under which he presents it to the fancy are descriptive of its effects. He delights to paint every object in motion, that he may raise a similar agitation in the bosom of the reader. But the calm deliberate thinker,

on the contrary, makes it his chief endeavour to seek out the remoter causes and principles which give birth to these appearances.

It is the highest exertion of a philosopher to strip off the false colours that serve to disguise, to remove every particular which fancy or folly have combined, and present to view the simple and naked truth. But the poet, who addresses the imagination and the heart, neglects no circumstance, however fanciful, which may serve to attach his descriptions more closely to the human mind. In describing the awful appearances of nature, he gladly avails himself of those magic terrors with which ignorance and superstition have surrounded them; for, though the light of reason dispels these shades, they answer the highest purpose of the poet, in awakening the passions. It is the delight of poetry to combine and associate; of philosophy, to separate and distinguish. The one resembles a skilful anatomist, who lays open every thing that occurs, and examines the smallest particulars of its make; the other a judicious painter, who conceals what would offend the eye, and embellishes every subject he undertakes to represent: the same object, therefore, which has engaged the investigating powers of the philosopher, takes a very different appearance from the forming hand of the poet, who adds every grace of colouring, and artfully hides the nakedness of the inward structure, under all the agreeable foldings of elegance and beauty. In philosophical discussions, the end of which is to explain, every part ought to be unfolded with the most lucid perspicuity. But works of imagination never exert a more powerful influence than when the author has contrived to throw over them a shade of darkness and doubt. The reason of this is obvious; the evils we but imperfectly discern seem to bid defiance to caution; they affect the mind with a fearful anxiety, and, by presenting no limits, the imagination easily conceives them boundless. These species of composition differ still further with respect to the situation of mind requisite to produce them. Poetry is the offspring of a mind heated to an uncommon degree; it is a kind of spirit thrown off in the effervescence of

the agitated feeling. But the utmost calmness and composure are essential to philosophical inquiry: novelty, surprise, and astonishment, kindle in the bosom the fire of poetry; whilst philosophy is reared up by cool and long-continued efforts. There is one circumstance relating to this kind of composition too material to be omitted. In every nation it has been found that poetry is of much earlier date than any other production of the human mind. As in the individual, the imagination and passions are more vigorous in youth, which in mature age subside, and give way to thought and reflection.

Something similar to this seems to characterize that genius which distinguishes the different periods of society. The most admired poems have been the offspring of uncultivated ages. Pure poetry consists of the descriptions of nature, and the display of the passions; to each of which a rude state of society is better adapted than one more polished. They who live in that early period in which art has not alleviated the calamities of life, are forced to feel their dependence upon nature. Her appearances are ever open to their view, and therefore strongly imprinted on their fancy. They shrink at the approach of a storm, and mark with anxious attention every variation of the sky. The change of seasons, cloud or sunshine, serenity and tempest, are to them real sources of sorrow and of joy; and we need not, therefore, wonder they should describe with energy what they feel with so much force. But it is one chief advantage of civilization that, by enabling us in some measure to control nature, we become less subject to its influence. It opens many new sources of enjoyment. In this situation, the gay and the cheerful can always mingle in company, whilst the diffusion of knowledge opens to the studious a new world, over which the whirlwind and the blast can exert no influence. The face of nature gradually retires from view, and those who attempt to describe it often content themselves with copying from books, whereby their descriptions want the freshness and glow of original observation: like the image of an object reflected through various mediums, each of which varies

somewhat of its form, and lessens its splendour. The poetry of uncivilized nations has, therefore, often excelled the productions of a more refined people, in elevation and pathos. Accustomed to survey nature only in her general form, and grander movements, their descriptions cannot fail of carrying with them an air of greatness and sublimity. They paint scenes which every one has felt, and which therefore need only to be presented to awaken a similar feeling again. For a while, they delight us with the vastness of their conceptions; but the want of various embellishments, and the frequent recurrence of the same images, soon fatigues the attention, and their poetry may be compared to the world of waters, which fills us with amazement, but upon which we gaze for a moment, and then turn away our eyes. It is the advantage of enlightened nations that their superior knowledge enables them to supply greater variety, and to render poetry more copious. They allure with an agreeable succession of images. They do not weary with uniformity, or overpower us with the continuance of any one exertion; but, by perpetually shifting the scene, they keep us in a constant hurry of delight.

> "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."
>
> *Shakspeare's Midsummer-Night's Dream.*

I cannot help observing that poetical genius seems capable of much greater variety than talents for philosophizing. The power of thinking and reasoning is a simple energy, which exerts itself in all men nearly in the same manner; indeed, the chief varieties that have been observed in it may be traced to two—a capacity of abstract and mathematical reasoning, and a talent for collecting facts and making observations; these qualities of mind, blended in various proportions, will, for the most part, account for any peculiarities attending men's modes of thinking. But the ingredients that constitute

a poet are far more various and complicated. A poet is, in a high degree, under the influence of the imagination and passions, principles of mind very various and extensive. Whatever is complicated is capable of much greater variety, and will be extremely more diversified in its form, than that which is more simple. In this case, every ingredient is a source of variety; and, by being mingled in the composition in a greater or less degree, may give an original cast to the whole.

To explain the particular causes which vary the direction of the fancy in different men, would, perhaps, be no easy task. We are led, it may be at first through accident, to the survey of one class of objects; this calls up a particular train of thinking, which we afterwards freely indulge; it easily finds access to the mind upon all occasions; the slightest actions serve to suggest it. It is nursed by habit, and reared up with attention, till it gradually swells to a torrent, which bears away every obstacle, and awakens in the mind the consciousness of peculiar powers. Such sensations eagerly impel to a particular purpose, and are sufficient to give to composition a distinct and determinate character.

Poetical genius is likewise much under the influence of the passions. The pleased and the splenetic, the serious and the gay, survey nature with very different eyes. That elevation of fancy which, with a melancholy turn, will produce scenes of gloomy grandeur and awful solemnity, will lead another, of a cheerful complexion, to delight, by presenting images of splendour and gaiety, and by inspiring gladness and joy. To these, and other similar causes, may be traced that boundless variety which diversifies the works of imagination, and which is so great, that I have thought the perusal of fine authors is like traversing the different regions of the earth. Some glow with a pleasant and refreshing warmth, whilst others kindle with a fierce and fiery heat: in one we meet with scenes of elegance and art, all is correct and regular, and a thousand beautiful objects spread their colours to the eye, and regale the senses; in another, we behold nature in an unadorned majestic simplicity,

scouring the plain with the tempest, sitting upon a rock, or walking upon the wings of the wind Here we meet with a Sterne, who fans us with the softest delicacies; and there with a Rousseau, who hurries us along in whirlwind and tempest. Hence that delightful succession of emotions which are felt in the bosom of sensibility. We feel the empire of genius, we imbibe the impression, and the mind resembles an enchanted mansion, which, at the touch of some superior hand, at one time brightens into beauty, and at another darkens into horror. Even where the talents of men approach most nearly, an attentive eye will ever remark some small shades of difference, sufficient to distinguish them. Perhaps few authors have been distinguished by more similar features of character than Homer and Milton. That vastness of thought which fills the imagination, and that sensibility of spirit which renders every circumstance interesting, are the qualities of both: but Milton is the most sublime, and Homer the most picturesque. Homer lived in an early age, before knowledge was much advanced; he would derive little from any acquired abilities, and therefore may be styled the poet of nature. To this source, perhaps, we may trace the principal difference betwixt Homer and Milton. The Grecian poet was left to the movements of his own mind, and to the full influence of that variety of passions which are common to all: his conceptions are therefore distinguished by their simplicity and force. In Milton, who was skilled in almost every department of science, learning seems sometimes to have shaded the splendour of genius.

No epic poet excites emotions so fervid as Homer, or possesses so much fire; but in point of sublimity he cannot be compared to Milton. I rather think the Greek poet has been thought to excel in this quality more than he really does, for want of a proper conception of its effects. When the perusal of an author raises us above our usual tone of mind, we immediately ascribe those sensations to the sublime, without considering whether they light on the imagination or the feelings; whether they elevate the fancy, or only fire the passions.

The sublime has for its object the imagination only, and its influence is not so much to occasion any fervour of feeling, as the calmness of fixed astonishment. If we consider the sublime as thus distinguished from every other quality, Milton will appear to possess it in an unrivalled degree; and here indeed lies the secret of his power. The perusal of Homer inspires us with an ardent sensibility; Milton with the stillness of surprise. The one fills and delights the mind with the confluence of various emotions; the other amazes with the vastness of his ideas. The movements of Milton's mind are steady and progressive: he carries the fancy through successive stages of elevation, and gradually increases the heat by adding fuel to the fire.

The flights of Homer are more sudden and transitory. Milton, whose mind was enlightened by science, appears the most comprehensive; he shows more acuteness in his reflections, and more sublimity of thought. Homer, who lived more with men, and had perhaps a deeper tincture of the human passions, is by far the most vehement and picturesque. To the view of Milton, the wide scenes of the universe seem to have been thrown open, which he regards with a cool and comprehensive survey, little agitated, and superior to those emotions which affect inferior mortals. Homer, when he rises the highest, goes not beyond the bounds of human nature; he still connects his descriptions with human passions, and, though his ideas have less sublimity, they have more fire. The appetite for greatness—that appetite which always grasps at more than it can contain, is never so fully satisfied as in the perusal of "Paradise Lost." In following Milton, we grow familiar with new worlds, we traverse the immensities of space, wandering in amazement, and finding no bounds. Homer confines the mind to a narrower circle, but that circle he brings nearer to the eye; he fills it with a quicker succession of objects, and makes it the scene of more interesting action

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